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WOMAN'S FAITH.

A Tale of Southern Life.

WOMAN'S FAITH.

A Tale of Southern Life.

"Full many a miserable year hath past—
She knows him as one dead, or worse than dead,
And many a change her varied life hath known,
But her heart none."

MATURIN'S BERTRAM.

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WOMAN'S FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

Near the close of a bright and lovely day in the early spring, some half century since, a gentleman and lady, accompanied by their two daughters, might be seen ascending the Bayou Teche, a stream which glides noiselessly along through the romantic region of the Attakapas, near the southern border of Louisiana.

The scenery was wild and highly picturesque. Upon either bank of this shaded rivulet, the large massive live-oak stretched wide its giant branches, the deep, rich green of its foliage contrasting mournfully with the sable moss, that, in graceful festoons, was hanging, like the drapery of woe, from the topmost limb of the stately tree. The whole air was perfumed from the blossoms, snowy-white, which thickly clustered upon the tall magnolia, standing side by side with the oak, as if in rivalry, fit representatives of the strength and beauty of nature, in her wildest magnificence. Along the banks of the bayou, the vine and the jasmine gracefully interlacing each other, were twining their tiny threads around the slender bay-tree, as if vying with each other, the one loaded with most delicious fruit, and the other displaying a grace and beauty unrivalled, and distilling perfumes of the most exquisite sweetness. It was a scene of placid beauty.

The sound of the woodman's axe was unheard; for here were no primeval forests, but a wide, unbounded prairie stretched far away beyond the power of human vision, broad and boundless as the illimitable sea. Herds of buffalo, and the fleet and graceful deer, were feeding quietly upon the tall, rank grass, while here and there in the distance arose, like green islets in a lake, thick copses of the fir and pecan tree, a welcome retreat for the traveller, wearied with the heat and burden of the day.

Such was the scene which first met the admiring and astonished gaze of Mr. and Mrs. Lefort, and their two lovely daughters.

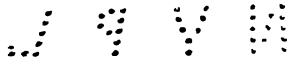
This was the home of their adoption. For it they had given up the advantages and comforts of refined society, and bade a final farewell to the home and associations of earlier and happier years. There was something in the air and manner of Lefort most attractive and winning.

Somewhat past the middle age of life, his once raven hair slightly tinged, rather by the vicissitudes through which he had been called to pass, than by the pencil of time, he was a fine specimen of the old French nobility. The classic brow, the dark and flashing eye, the erect and manly form, the grace which marked every movement, assured you, that nurtured and educated in the most cultivated society, he must have been its pride and its ornament.

With an ample fortune, he had been enabled to gratify every desire of a mind, richly endowed by nature, and matured by study and reflection.

Without being an exact scholar, he had stored his memory with the beauties of classic literature, and his taste, naturally correct, received its impressions and directions from the great masters of prose and song.

Scarcely had the morning of his life been passed, and its noon *begun, before that frightful* revolution, which, like the terrible



sirocco, passed over France, burning and blasting every green spot and beautiful creation, that civilization had loved and cherished. It was enough to have been born of noble blood, to have been the heir of estates, or titles; for this, the penalty denounced by tyranny, was an ignominious death.

Amidst such scenes, passing through such conflicts, deprived by arbitrary power of home, and country, and fortune, with no hope, but in flight, from unbounded affluence, reduced in a moment to the very verge of penury, it would be strange indeed, if it had not wrought a change in his whole character. There is too something in adversity, which softens the temper, and ofttimes imparts a charm and grandeur to character, surpassingly strange and wonderful to those who have never explored the depths of mental philosophy.

To those, who have been tried in this school, human existence appears in its true colors, and the difficulties encountered, and resisted, give strength and completeness to the whole character.

Like the oak of the forest, which the fierce blast seems only to strengthen, and around which the lightnings flash, and play in awful sublimity, yet do not consume it, so do the sharp and fiery conflicts, which we are sometimes called to contend with, serve a purpose most beneficent.

With a constancy and courage, that no power could appal, Lefort with his confreres, the most elevated and gifted of the land, men possessing the richest mental endowments, renowned for a lofty and chilvalric bearing, vainly struggled with almost superhuman fortitude to thwart the terrible machinations, which tyranny was employing for their destruction. The blood of the nobles was to be the seed of the Republic. Most of this gallant band perished upon the scaffold, or by the hand of some hired assassin. Others sought refuge in flight, and by the warning of some faithful dependents, the family of Lefort were enabled to

avoid a terrible fate, reserved for them by those blood thirsty monsters, who, in their savage ferocity, spared neither age nor sex.

Escaping from France, they sought in England that protection denied to them in their own country, and in retirement, and comparative obscurity, passed several years of exile. Books were their only resource. Father and mother found their happiness in the education of Louise and Blanche, imparting to them those accomplishments, which had made themselves the ornaments of the most brilliant and polished society.

By an acquirement of a thorough and accurate knowledge of the language of the country, to which they were exiled, they were enabled to enjoy, and profit by the surpassing wealth of English literature, and at the same time, cultivated successfully the beautiful accomplishments of music, and painting.

Mr. and Mrs. Lefort forgot, in their charming daughters, the sorrows of exile, while hope pictured with the most brilliant coloring, some scene in the future, though it might be far distant, and reached through difficulties the most arduous, when they, taking their rightful position in the high places of society, would be, from their endowments, their accomplishments, their graceful and winning manners, the admired of every circle, the cynosure of every eye.

After years of absence, embittered by the most straitened circumstances, amidst strangers, far away from all that was dear to them in life, they were cheered with the hope, that upon the death of those monsters in crime, who had driven them away from their beautiful France, and upon the institution of a new government, they might return in safety to their native land, and successfully demand a restoration to the honors and estates, which for so long a time, and so unjustly, had been wrested from them. Year after year they patiently awaited upon the vacillating conduct of those, who held the reins of government, listening with

hope to the assurances held out, that their rightful claims should soon be fully recognized.

But the promises of to-day were to be deferred, or broken on the morrow, until at last, wearied and worn out by the delusions, and miserable subterfuges of which they had so long been the victims, they turned their eyes to the New World, the natural wealth of which, with its unequalled climate, was at this time the wonder and admiration of France, from the glowing accounts given by those who had witnessed its almost fabled magnificence.

Restored at last to some considerable portion of his estates, Lefort determined to establish for himself and family, a home in that portion of America, so exquisitely described by Chateaubriand, as a land of flowers, with skies as clear and bright, and airs as soft and balmy as those of Italy, while under its mild, paternal government, he might enjoy that freedom and those rights to which he had so long been a stranger.

After a tedious, weary voyage, their eyes were at last gladdened by the long line of coast stretching out upon the Gulf of Mexico, and with cheerful hearts they reached the spot, a faint description of which we have attempted in the foregoing pages.

Thrilling as are some of the incidents occurring in the every-day life of those, who emigrating from the Old World, with all its attractions, to the wonders of the New, deprived of what they had deemed actual necessaries, yet so often and so graphically have they been described in the brilliant pages of romance and song, that we hurry past the adventures and trials, well-nigh unendurable.

Years had passed away, and upon the banks of the Teche, Lefort had reared a commodious and beautiful cottage, embowered in a grove of the live-oak, and magnolia, with the fig, the peach, and the orange growing in the greatest perfection and profusion.

Surrounded by all the comforts and many of the embellish-

ments of life, in the midst of a society, whose hospitality was unrivalled, whose happiness was not marred by the restless and avaricious passions which have too much distinguished the Anglo-Saxon race, they lived contented and happy. With a soil yielding an abundance of all the necessaries of life, by labor put forth as the merest recreation, while the waters and the chase afforded every delicacy; in such a society, and in the midst of the unbounded affluence of this terrestrial paradise of America, years had glided calmly and sweetly away.

Wisely had Lefort adopted the sentiment of an old English emigrant, "My family is my country."

We will reserve for another chapter, a description of that household, the abode of happiness, of calm, peaceful, quiet joy, unmarred by anxiety, unmolested by the ruthless hand of oppression.

CHAPTER II.

CHECKERED indeed had been the life and fortunes of the family of Le Fort. The dazzling and brilliant spectacles of Paris were associated in the recollections of Louise and Blanche, with the hideous yells of an infuriated mob. Their remembrances of a home, which had been adorned by all that wealth and taste could furnish, were darkened and saddened, as they looked back upon its desecration by those, whose demoniac passions could only be satiated in the utter annihilation of even a sentiment, the offspring of intelligence and virtue.

Reflections like these, had lent a new attraction to home, a sweeter charm to parental love. Trials and dangers had bound them all together, with those strong and golden bands, which could only be sundered by that power, which none may resist. Between the two sisters, the ornaments of that forest home, there was a striking and singular contrast. Louise, the elder of the two, had now reached her eighteenth year. The vicissitudes, which had clouded her life's morning, the necessity which had compelled her, in the very spring-time of her existence, not only to depend upon herself, but, as far as might be, to cheer and soften the sorrows, which were pressing with leaden weight upon the torn hearts of her parents, whom she loved with doating fondness, all imparted to her a maturity of character, rarely witnessed in any one of her sex. Her dark, full melancholy eye, her brow, all the features of her face, finely chiselled, as if to realize the dream of the *sculptor*, her glossy raven hair, in rich profusion,

adorning a head faultless in its proportions, her neck and throat full, and with that perfection of form and movement, so queenlike, a complexion dark, but brilliant, all combined, at first sight to win the admiration of all who met her.

Her bust, her figure, were as elegant as her striking and lovely countenance. There was an ease and grace in all her movements, rendering her irresistibly attractive. From early childhood manifesting a passionate fondness for books, she had stored her mind with all that was beautiful and useful in literature, and at the same time cultivated her decided taste for music and painting, in both of which she might successfully contest for the palm with all but professional artists. Beautiful as she was, and thus highly accomplished, there was such perfect simplicity of character, that entire absence of all vanity or haughtiness of manner, such an evident and hearty desire to add to the happiness of all around her, that she at once became the favorite of the circle in which she moved.

A tinge of melancholy, slight it is true, softening the expression of her large lustrous eyes, was so appealing to your sympathy, so touching and so true, that before you had perceived the enchantment of her manners, and the brilliancy of her conversation, she had won your deepest regard. How shall I attempt a description of the lovely and beautiful Blanche, the charms of her person or mind, so peculiar to herself.

Her face, her features, all changing with the varying mood in which you might chance to find her. Buoyant and happy in her disposition, her face ever wreathed with smiles, she was the light and joy of the household. She was a blonde. Her beautiful tresses clustering in golden curls and floating uncontrolled over her fair cheek and swan-like neck, as if unwilling to display her exquisite complexion, her deep blue eye, now laughing at her own merry thoughts, or quickly suffused by some touching sentiment, *was irresistibly fascinating* and attractive, while the expression of

her face was so striking, so telling of the emotions within, almost informed you of her thoughts ere her lips essayed that office.

Her constitution, delicate by nature, received a shock from the exposures and hardships incident upon the sudden transition from every luxury to penury, the fruits of her father's banishment. She became, therefore, the petted child, and without intending it, her wishes and welfare seemed first to be consulted. Although not spoiled by indulgence, it yet unfitted her to bear with contradiction.

The caprices of her childhood were overlooked by the partial eye of doating parents; she was permitted to grow up with as little restraint as possible upon her gay and happy spirit. The native goodness of her heart was a restraint upon her excitable temper, the quick flashes of which would swiftly pass away, and be lost in the first exhibition of kindness or wounded affection. Vain were the attempts to describe this sweet child of nature; her character, her endowments, mental and physical, as unfolded in the following pages, will be the best and most accurate delineation.

CHAPTER III.

"And this is to be our home, the land of our adoption. I sometimes fancy," continued Blanche, "that we are all wearing masks—at least, concealing from each other our real sentiments."

"Why Blanche, what do you mean?" said Louise; "I think if we have any peculiarities of character or disposition, it is our perfect frankness, absence of all concealment. Do tell me what you were thinking about or intended by your remark?"

"Nothing of consequence," said Blanche. "But do you think that father, whose life has been passed amidst exciting scenes in the gayest and most fashionable metropolis in the world, and that mother, who has from her earliest infancy gazed with wonder and admiration upon all that splendor, and show, and partaken of its fascination, do you think that they can be contented and happy in this calm, quiet, secluded spot? I have scarcely dared ask myself, if I could give up Paris for a wilderness. The very name of Louisiana will awaken recollections saddening enough, and I fear that home-sickness will be, with us, a more fatal disease than any fever peculiar to the climate."

"Oh, Blanche," replied Louise, "you will get bravely over all these imaginary troubles. You will find resources enough, even here, to make you happy; you will have books and music and out-door employment, so that each hour will be agreeably filled up, and you will have no hours of ennui."

"Yes, I shall be a perfect blue-stocking, and so much time *upon my hands, that* I can commit to memory a well-stocked

library, and practice music, until its most delightful strains shall be sickening from repetition. I wish I were possessed of a little of your philosophy, or had the faculty of finding pleasure in the pathless woods."

"How little, Blanche, you know of Louisiana life, and yet you form your opinions, as if determined in advance to be unhappy. Why, you told me but yesterday, you envied our neighbors, who were all starting off, a perfect cavalcade, with guns and fishing-rods, and baskets loaded with everything which could tempt the appetite, as if bent upon a rural frolic. What have we seen in France, that should make us regret it? Father and mother, accused even of no crime, flying for their lives with two young children, a price set upon their heads, stripped of their property, sure. sure am I, that such recollections disrobe even my native land of all charms in my eyes."

"I did not mean to complain of my lot," said Blanche, "I was speaking of the great contrast between our home upon the Seine and this vegetating upon the banks of this wild bayou, and if the comparison was unfavorable for the latter, surely it is no fault of mine."

"I have no fear, Blanche, for your happiness. We really are incapable of judging upon a subject of which we are so little informed. We will have occupation for some time, in returning the calls of our kind and hospitable neighbors, and when you return from your ride to-morrow with father, I expect you will go into raptures with the wonders you have seen."

"Blanche, I came," said her father, "to tell you I should rouse you early to-morrow morning, for our promised ride."

"Not before breakfast, father; I should faint in my saddle."

"I'll take care of that, my dear. You have no conception how beautiful the prairies appear, at break of day. The melting of the dew upon the flowers, as the soft breeze of the morning kisses it, the carol of the birds, as if welcoming the earliest light of returning

day, the cheerful face of the herdsman, as he rides over these boundless fields, to look after his cattle, are all objects of interest unknown to those who prefer remaining in their beds till the sun has journeyed far over the heavens."

"You are so poetical, father, in your description, that I fear you indulge the poets' license, and I shall have to draw largely upon my fancy to perceive the beauties you described to us."

"Well, try it once, Blanche, and if you are not equally charmed with the delightful panorama, which shall greet your eyes, then you may set me down as the wildest of all enthusiasts."

At the very peep of day, Blanche and Louise were aroused from their slumbers, by the summons of their father.

"I do dread this ride," said Blanche, "and were it not that I should greatly disappoint father, I would tell him of a headache I feel, which unfits me for so early an excursion."

"I know you will enjoy yourself," said Louise. "Come, I will help you dress, and you must be down in a giffy, for I see father at the side of your horse, who is pawing the ground, as if impatient to be off."

Two hours had scarcely passed, when Blanche came galloping up the lawn, with a rosy hue upon her fair cheek, and bright smiles mantling her expressive countenance from the exercise of the morning. She could scarcely wait to tell of the pleasure of her ride, and of the objects which so delighted her.

"I can scarcely tell you," said Blanche, "how delightful was our horseback excursion, upon our boundless prairies. I hardly believed father when he described the loveliness of these wild scenes, in the dawning of the morning, for I thought it was but an ingenious device of his, to induce me to take exercise before breakfast. But at this early hour, the air is so elastic and bracing, and the whole face of nature seems so refreshed and beautiful, that one is amply repaid for the little exertion it requires, to shake off *the power* which a morning nap possesses."

"Did you not feel exhausted from the effects of so long a ride before breakfast?" said Louise.

"Oh, no, for as I went down, dressed cap-a-pie for my ride, father had made, from his little cafetière, in about ten minutes, a most delicious cup of coffee, which was so exhilarating, that I chatted like a magpie for miles, hardly giving him an opportunity to slip in a word edgewise; for with my coffee and the bouyancy of feeling, which the galloping of my fleet little pony creates, I was completely wild with delight. And oh, how I wish I could describe to you those magnificent herds of buffalo, which started with such stately steps at our approach, now and then the male leader of the band turning back upon us his wild flashing eye, and shaking his shaggy head, as if half inclined to dispute our passage over his wild domains. I confess all the strength of my courage would have failed, but for father's oft repeated assurance of safety. He said, 'with his unerring rifle,' which always hangs at his saddle bow, 'he could at a hundred yards bring down that proud leader, when the remainder of the herd would at once seek safety in flight.' And again, just as we approached a little grove of holly and, bay trees, we started up a gang of wild horses, which you know abound upon the prairies, and such a scampering, tossing of tails, and noisy neighing, you never witnessed, and my little creole rascal seemed to have discovered some old relative or acquaintance, for it required all my power to restrain him, from dashing off among the swiftest of these nimble and beautiful animals. But I have not time to tell you a tithe of the various objects of interest which enlivened our most charming excursion; one thing I can assure you, it has given me a most excellent appetite for these warm muffins, and tempting rice birds, which I see Aunt Nancy has prepared for our déjeûner."

"Father, you will be pleased," said Louise, "with the progress Mr. Mason is making with our cottage. He is delighted with the plan you obtained *in Paris*, but proposes some alterations, required

he thinks by our climate, and the situation of the ground. He says Blanche has given him directions as to the room for the library, which will demand some changes, and that she will pay no attention to any particular style of architecture, but it must exactly suit her fancy."

"Well that must be so, for when I first talked of building, she asked me to promise that she might have the entire direction as to one of the rooms and its furniture," said Lefort.

"Supposing the little witch intended her own sleeping-apartment, I told him that her whole wishes, in spirit and letter, should be fully obeyed and carried out, when clapping her little hands, and kissing me some fifty times, she exclaimed, 'The library and its fitting up are all my own.' She had fairly caught me, and her wishes must be law, in regard to this part of our cottage."

CHAPTER IV.

THE predictions of Louise were now realized in regard to Blanche. A change had come o'er the spirit of her dream. Every hour was fully occupied. At night she retired to her chamber with new plans for the morrow, and the sun seemed to her busy spirit laggard on his march, as she awaited his coming to commence the employments, to her, so full of interest. She was at the side of the workmen, with plans in her hands, as they were laying out the grounds about the cottage, which was now in the course of erection, bidding them, by all means, be careful of injuring the old stately trees, which, for ages, had been the monarchs of the wood, assuring them, at the same time, that no garden was half as attractive as the one already provided to their hands.

The space of ground, which was reserved as a lawn about the house, occupied more than a hundred acres. This enclosure was to be left in its natural state, the tangled undergrowth merely being cleared away, and to be a safe retreat for the deer, the rabbit, and the squirrel, while the birds should build their nests, undisturbed, as if the foot of man had never trodden these tropical regions.

The meanderings of the bayou furnished, at the southern extremity of this lovely lawn, by means of wicket gates, a pond of clear, pure water, filled with fish of almost every hue, from the bright and glowing red-fish to the golden perch. Walks were to be laid out, *arbors erected*, and a broad avenue, overlaid with

shells from the sea shore, for carriages, was to be prepared, forming a pleasant drive through these shaded and picturesque grounds.

"What a pleasant place," said Blanche to herself, "will our home be. The air redolent with the most delicious perfumes, the songs of the birds awaking the morning, and hushing to sweet repose at evening the weary children of nature, our out-door life will be most alluring. The cottage, too, so tastefully planned, so completely adapted to the requirements of our climate, will ever be, for us, a most delightful home. I could not have believed, when pouring my sad regrets into the ear of Louise, that so soon I should regard this spot with so deep an interest. Father, too, is so indulgent that I have only to express a wish to have it completely gratified."

"What think you now, Blanche, about this dull, stupid life in the country?" said Louise. "You seem perfectly metamorphosed, and from your occupations and dress, might well sit for a Flora, if one were wanted to decorate the arbors, which you have so tastefully planned. The only objects that can *vegetate* here are trees and plants, for yourself, you go over these grounds with the fleetness of a fawn, scarce giving yourself time to eat or sleep, so devoted are you to your employments.

"But the novelty will soon be over, Louise. The gardens, the walks, the flowers, and trees will all be arranged according to my taste, the cottage will be completed, and then must I return to my castle building."

"It would be so," said Louise, "if all these grounds were not to be kept in order; if books and paintings would arrange themselves upon the shelves, and along the walls, and all household affairs would go on steadily and in order, as if some law, unerring as the physical laws, would keep everything in harmony and at work. But you will find enough to do in superintending those, to whose *care you may commit* all these interests, and each evening you

will wish that the demands of the day were not so urgent and pressing."

"I forgot to tell you," said Blanche, "of a call father and myself made yesterday upon Mr. and Mrs. Lamotte. The house had a dingy appearance, a queer and antiquated sort of Spanish construction. I expected to see some rickety chairs, and sanded floors, with ill concealed attempts at gentility. Judge of my astonishment, upon the servant throwing open the door, to be ushered into a wide handsome hall, and then shown into a drawing room, Parisian in all its furniture and decorations. Everything, the large spacious rooms, all the windows extending from the ceiling to the floor, the light graceful furniture, so adapted to the climate, it was truly charming. And Mr. and Mrs. Lamotte received us with such politeness and hospitality, so thoroughly well bred were they. I know not when I have met with such an agreeable surprise."

"Did they speak of the society about Oak Lawn?" said Louise.

"Yes," replied Blanche, "and assured me that I should find it most agreeable. The gay season, they said, was over, but the young ladies and gentlemen continued to amuse themselves in pic-nic parties, yachtings upon the gulf, and occasionally in large companies upon horseback; partaking on their return, a déjeûner à la fourchette, a most delightful repast at this season of the year."

"From her description of them they must afford great amusement."

"Are they Americans in manners and conversation?" said Louise.

"Mrs. Lamotte spoke almost entirely in French," said Blanche. "Her daughter conversed with her mother in that language; while with us, she seemed to prefer the English. Meeting them in Paris, you would hardly dream they had been out of France. Their complexion, their dark hair, their peculiarities in speech and manner, all remind you of our native home. The English of Miss Lamotte had *just* the accent that we find in our best edu-

cated Parisian ladies, who have spent some time in England to acquire that language."

"Each new acquaintance formed," said Louise, "and every familiar scene assures me that we shall be fully contented with our adopted home. I do not believe in the proverb, which has come down to us from the middle ages, *Nihil sine Gallis*, that there is nothing outside of France, but that we shall find in the wilds of America, as some flippant foreigners affect to speak of this noble country, in character and scenery, in society and occupation, here, the happiness, which we seek. Father says, this is but a fair specimen of the society which you will meet in this neighborhood."

"Well, if he is not mistaken," said Blanche, "nowhere will you find more polished and agreeable families. And their hospitality is unbounded. You are at once received with all the cordiality of old acquaintanceship. They appear as if you were bestowing a favor upon them by the visit, rather than conferring an obligation upon you. Their hearts seem to partake of the warmth of their climate. Affable, polite and cordial, you are at once put upon the footing of old familiar friendship."

"The fashion which obtains with them," said Louise, "is somewhat trying, of expecting the first call from the new comer. It must be most significant if the call should not be returned."

"They say," replied Blanche, "that it is the more correct and agreeable, for the stranger is not forced to the interchange of civilities, and if entitled to attentions is sure to receive them. I shall never forget the kind, heartfelt welcome with which we were met upon our arrival here, entire strangers; their doors were thrown open for our reception, as if we had been relatives of the family, returning home after a long absence. I am not surprised at the wide and general reputation they enjoy for the most generous *hospitality.*"

CHAPTER V.

The cottage to which we have made allusion will require some more particular description at our hands, as we desire our readers to become domesticated at Oak Lawn, and thereby become familiar with those, whose lives and characters are the subjects of our portraiture. For with the house and grounds, the taste exhibited, and the peculiarities displayed, we naturally form our opinions of those who inhabit them.

The wicket-gate, which opens to the humblest cot, invites one most winningly, surmounted as it is by the sweet woodbine, gracefully creeping over a little arch, which the sturdy beech had lent, and through which you look upon a well-swept walk, the carefully tended garden, and the wee little dwelling, nestling beneath the vine and the rose.

You know that, within, an industrious housewife, neatly apparelled and with a smiling face, throws a charm around a happy domestic circle, while the very approach to yonder square-built house, a burning sun pouring its rays upon its defenceless porch, an ambitious gateway decaying, ere it was half completed, the unfinished well, telling you that no cool water from that source may slake your thirst, all assure you that a thriftless man, without counting the cost, built that habitation, and that snarling discontent, and squalid poverty dwelt within.

But we must return from this digression. In the midst of a beautiful grove of live oak and magnolia, upon a slight elevation, commanding a wide extensive view of the prairies, and in sight of a stream, which *in its graceful* serpentine meanderings was pour-

ing its waters into the Gulf of Mexico, Lefort had reared a graceful cottage, in which were happily combined the beauties of architecture with all the comforts of a most commodious dwelling. In the planning of the house it was evident that the exquisite taste of woman had had no inconsiderable share, for while decoration and ornament was regarded as essential, scarcely a want was unsupplied in the conveniences afforded in this lovely dwelling.

Occupying, as we have said, a large space of ground, elevated some ten or twelve feet, a flight of steps led to a wide, tasteful veranda, extending entirely around the house, supported upon Grecian columns of singular beauty. Through the whole length of this spacious dwelling, a wide hall extended, furnishing a most inviting spot for a siesta during the midday heat, open as it was to the breeze, and protected from the rays of the sun by embowering oaks.

Blanche, as we have remarked, had the planning and fitting up of the library. This, to one who had any taste for letters or objects of vertu, was a most delightful apartment. It was an offshoot from the main building, though strictly connected with it. A wide hall leading from the dining-room, ventilated and lighted by a sky-light, the glass of which was exquisitely colored, and along its walls were tastefully arrayed some beautiful works of art, statues and paintings, handmaids to the more elaborate productions of mind, to which they introduced you; opposite the doorway was a large projecting window opening upon the lawn, shaded by a clump of orange trees, softening the light and perfuming the air which it admitted. Its beautiful alcoves were separated from the main room by Grecian columns, upon which, with consummate skill, some classical device was painted, emblematic of the subject discussed in the volumes there reposing. Within each was a seat of tasteful workmanship, and admirably adapted *to the comfort of* the occupant. In the spaces between the

alcoves were tables covered with maps, books, of engravings, natural curiosities, gathered from almost every region. Upon the panels were painted some lovely views of scenery upon the Seine, the Tuileries and the old palace home of Lefort in Paris, while upon the ceiling were beautifully grouped in fresco, dancing nymphs floating in azure. Her father had bidden Blanche give full wing to her fancy, and fit up this bijou as she termed it, exactly to her taste without regard to expense. The furniture of the apartment was in perfect keeping with the object of it, with all the larger pieces of which there were some interesting historical recollections or romantic incident, which Lefort had been enabled to find in Europe. Upon the book-shelves were found the finest editions of almost every work in literature, and the selection showed the mind and taste of a most classical and thorough scholar. The carpet, a dark maroon ground with bunches of flowers of most brilliant coloring, beautifully harmonizing with all the furniture and decorations, manifested the taste which presided over this most fascinating spot in the dwelling of Lefort. From the campanile or bell-tower, in which the highest taste of the architect was displayed, the eye took in the varied beauties of a lovely landscape, and the white sails that dotted the Gulf, from the majestic ship of the line ploughing her way through the dark waters, to the light and graceful pinnace, which danced upon the crested wave, "like a thing of life."

CHAPTER VI.

At a session of one of the courts of the parish, Mr. Lefort had been summoned to serve as a juror, and though he had scarcely ever, during his married life, been separated from his family, as the distance was not very great, he was rather gratified than otherwise, as a cause, which had excited great interest and consideration throughout the neighborhood, was to be tried, and Mr. Lefort was anxious to be present. The court having been organized, Mr. Lefort was selected as the foreman upon the jury about to try the cause of the State *vs.* Paul Eaton, then on trial for his life.

He was a missionary sent forth in those early days, by that most useful and pious sect, the Methodists. Having literally neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in his purse, nor scrip for his journey, he was rich in faith, and bold in the cause of Him, who had instructed his disciples to fear not him, who can kill the body only.

Wherever Eaton went, by the way-side and in the house, that was worthy, he taught in simplicity and in truth, the words of everlasting life.

Bold and fearless in the cause of his Master, he had denounced the worship of saints, and absolution by the priests, as unwarranted by the Word, which he preached.

He inveighed, in unsparing terms, against the immorality of men, who, by their traffic in liquid poison, destroyed both soul and body for ever.

Seeing that their craft was in danger, at the instigation of a

Jesuit priest, and the owner of a dram-shop, a charge was made against him, and busily circulated, that he was an abolitionist in disguise, that he had attempted to create an insurrection among the slaves.

He was upon this charge, and upon false testimony, thrust into prison.

For this he was indicted. So powerful and influential were the enemies of Eaton, and the charge one which so readily aroused popular indignation; so poor, and so humble the accused, that bigotry and superstition felt sure of their victim.

Upon being arraigned for his trial, he was asked by the judge, who was his counsel? He replied, "With no wealth, save the riches of infinite love; no friends, but those, who in highways and hedges have heard the Word of life, and believed, vainly should I have sought professional assistance. My reliance is upon the word of Him, who, when He sent me forth, bade me, when called before kings and governors, fear not, for it should then be given me what to speak. I stand upon my innocence, upon the clemency and justice of the court, the intelligence and integrity of the jury."

When Eaton sat down, William Burns, who as yet having had little opportunity for the exhibition of his abilities, arose, and announced, that with the permission of the court, and the consent of the accused, he would volunteer his services in his defence; but as he had heard nothing of the case, had had no opportunity for consultation with his client, he would ask a postponement until the following day.

It was accorded him, and an hour's conversation with poor Eaton, satisfied this noble young advocate, that he, whom he was to defend, was to be sacrificed for the gratification of a most malicious and vindictive hostility.

When Burns returned to the hotel, he was at once accosted by his friends, who said to him, "Why do you put at hazard all

your future success in your profession, by taking voluntarily upon yourself, without fee or reward, the defence of this strolling preacher. The evidence is clear against him; it was proved before the committing magistrate by several witnesses, that he had, again and again, been seen tampering with the slaves, and that Eaton had told a large assemblage of them, that if they would renounce all confidence in confessions, counting of beads, and in the signs of the cross, they should all be free. Give up, then this defence; feign sickness or want of time; for, rely upon it, if you persevere, your client will not only be convicted, but suspected yourself of being an abolitionist, you will lose caste in society, and the avenues to fame and fortune will be closed to you for ever."

"You little know me, Norton," was the reply of Burns, "if you think I should be swerved one hair's breath from what I deem the line of duty, by any consideration addressed to my interest. I shall not prove recreant to the soil which gave me birth; to the noble lessons which were taught me in the old Bay State from my mother's knee, to feel an abhorrence for oppression. It is the boast of the profession, which I have adopted, that the innocent may look up to it with confidence, as its sure and appropriate shield. And when, from sordid and unworthy motives, I shall fail to plead the cause of the poor and the oppressed, may my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." So decided was the manner, so lofty the tone, and so correct the sentiment of the excited and intellectual advocate, that further opposition to his conduct in this matter was abandoned. They hoped by the aid of old and experienced lawyers, and by the influence brought to bear from the planting interest, and by the large array of witnesses which were summoned, they would break down all opposition, and succeed in convicting the accused of a crime which would deprive *him of his life.*

On the following day the trial proceeded. In an opening speech made by Cartland, the district attorney, he called upon the jury to disregard all considerations but their duty to the State; that to their care was committed the safety of the institutions of the South. That if from any appeals which might be made to their sympathies, or if yielding to any sectarian prejudice, they should be led astray from their duty; or if by the well concerted scheme of the prisoner, who had assumed the garb of a missionary, that he might the more readily gain access to the ear of the slave; if from any or all of these considerations, they should fail in the fulfillment of the high trust committed to their charge, an amount of responsibility would lie at their door, most fearful. No one in the community would be safe. An insurrection most frightful in its consequences, would be the result. The midnight torch would wrap in flames our now happy and peaceful habitations; your wives and your daughters would be at the mercy of an infuriated, relentless set of desperadoes. This, our now delightful home, with all the embellishments which wealth, and art, and nature have crowned it, will be made the abode of wretchedness and misery, which no imagination can portray.

He alluded to the scenes in St. Domingo, the horrid butcheries attendant upon the revolt in that island, and drew a picture, which excited the intensest horror in the minds of all his auditors. He referred to the testimony by which the charge would be established, to the great number of witnesses, and especially, to the testimony of the Rev. Mr. Justiniani, a priest, at whose hands your children have received baptismal rights, whose ministrations at the graves of those you have loved, and lost, have assured you of the deep interest he feels in your welfare and happiness.

During the delivery of this speech, so well calculated to arouse the *popular frenzy, you could see the angry expressive scowl, and*

hear the half suppressed, half muttered whisperings, and angry denunciations of a crowded court-room.

No face in that vast assembly seemed so serene, no brow so imperturbed as that of Paul Eaton. Sitting by the side of his inexperienced advocate, who though confident of his client's innocence, felt that in the violent popular prejudice, which had been fanned into a flame, and the untiring efforts of the enemies of Eaton, he was involved in difficulties, to extricate him from which, required all the tact, learning and experience of the wisest and most eloquent of the profession.

He could not but feel the greatest uneasiness, under the load of responsibility, which he had assumed, and with nervous excitement awaited the introduction of the witnesses, who were to make out the case for the government.

It would be tedious to dwell upon the details of the cause, and we will allude only to a large number of witnesses, who spoke of the conduct of Eaton with the slaves, of an apparent familiarity with them, sometimes accompanying them in the field, and occasionally in their log huts, upon the banks of the bayou.

The district attorney then brought forward the two principal witnesses, upon whose evidence he relied most confidently for a verdict in his favor.

Sam Bennet, a man who had amassed considerable property in winning at games of hazard, from the young and unwary, and by the sale of intoxicating drinks at the miserable whisky shop, which bore the high sounding appellation of "The Attakapas Exchange," was called to the stand.

He was devoid of all principle, cunning, shrewd, and selfish to a degree, and was ever loudest as a champion of Southern rights.

With holy horror he lamented the influence of the new light, the canting hypocrisy, the ill regulated zeal of long-faced Methodists, who he said were making sad inroads upon the doctrines and *teachings of the* Catholic religion, established by Spain and

France, when in possession of this country, a religion which interfered with no man's business, under which all trades could prosper, whether the traffic was in the souls or bodies of men.

The other witness, Justiniani, was a designing and artful Jesuit priest, educated to believe in the infallibility of the Catholic church, and that the end always justifies the means.

Born and educated in a land where despotism reigned supreme, he would resort to any expedient for carrying out a desirable object. Bennet being asked to state what he knew in regard to the prisoner's guilt, affected great ignorance, and could at first state nothing, but what was drawn from him by a critical examination, but having effected his object to appear unprejudiced, and his desire being quickened for the conviction of Eaton, he went on of his own accord, and stated that he had seen Eaton with the slaves, and suspecting from his manner, and conduct, that he had some evil designs, he had watched him, and on a night after a meeting of the slaves was concluded, seeing him walking with two very intelligent servants of Mr. Lawton's, he stole up near to them, and heard him advise them to run away from their masters, and he would aid them in their escape. That they could soon reach the Mississippi river, and they would go on board a ship bound for Boston, under his protection. He further stated that but for the influence of priest Justiniani, he could easily have freed these slaves, they were so numerous, much more powerful than the whites, and they had only to make a show of resistance and the thing was done.

After some other immaterial statements, he was turned over to Burns, for a cross examination, but it seemed impossible to detect him, if his story was fabricated for the occasion. He stated it with such an air of truth, so calm, and collected was his manner, so ready to answer every possible question, so patient, that after a

most rigid and scrutinizing examination, he was directed to leave the witness box.

Mr. Justiniani was then called, and the substance of his testimony was that an old and highly intelligent slave, who had long been a member of that church, had, at the confessional, stated that Eaton had urged upon him, and other slaves, to leave the service of their masters, and moreover told them, that inasmuch as it was a sin in their masters, to hold them in bondage, they had a perfect right to resort to the most violent means, even unto death itself, to break this yoke, and told them that so far as he could aid them, he would cheerfully do so, at all hazards; that by the rule of the church, he was not permitted to give the name of any one, who confessed a fact, that might in any way implicate him.

Being asked by Mr. Burns how long he had known the prisoner, he said that he had no acquaintance with him, that knowing him to be a wicked and dangerous man, he had avoided his society.

Being asked if he felt no hostility to Eaton, he replied in the negative, and in answer to whether he had heard the denunciations of Eaton upon the Catholic church, and was therefore not prejudiced against him, replied, that he felt for him, no other emotion than pity; that like all heretics he regarded him as an enemy to the church, and therefore dangerous to society. The district attorney announced to the court, that the case on the part of the State was closed. Burns then called as witnesses for Eaton, a few highly respectable planters, to prove that for the short time they had known him, he had maintained a most irreproachable character; that at their own suggestion he had preached to their slaves, and always inculcated the doctrine, that slaves should be obedient to their masters; that they had found them remarkably docile, affectionate, and trustworthy, since they had been instructed by Eaton; that sometimes they thought him imprudent, when speaking upon the subject of Catholicism, and the sale of ardent spirits,

he denounced the pretensions of the priest, in the forgiveness of sins, and the dealer in what he termed liquid poison, as the destroyer of the happiness and peace of society. But as far as the sincerity and honesty of the accused was concerned, they never had, and did not now entertain a doubt in regard to it.

By permission of the court, Burns read some letters from planters in South Carolina, recommending Eaton, as a pious and worthy missionary.

The case was now closed for the prisoner, and the district attorney, after reading the statute defining the offence of an attempt to create an insurrection among the slaves, remarked, that the case was so fully made out, on the part of the prosecution that he would waive any further observations in the opening, and would reserve his comments upon the testimony, until his reply to the defence, which might be attempted on the part of the prisoner.

Having taken his seat, Burns arose and remarked to the court and jury, that he appeared before them for a defenceless stranger on trial for his life, with no other reward, than that of a consciousness of duty performed, and that however without these walls, public clamor might lift its angry voice, and popular prejudice impatiently await its victim, that before this jury, intelligent and impartial, sworn to try the cause solely upon the law, and the evidence, starting in their investigations with the presumption that the accused was innocent, no other consideration would influence their minds, but the testimony and the law, applicable to the cause. The eloquent appeal made by the counsel for the State to us, who are experienced in the trial of criminal causes, was somewhat unaffecting, inasmuch as we have listened again and again to his warning voice, bidding jurors beware of the necessity of maintaining the dignity of the law, and the great danger to society, if crime should go unwhipped of justice. But if their sympathies were to be aroused, if outside the evidence,

the facts and circumstances of this cause, any influence was to be brought to bear upon it, the condition of the prisoner at the bar, unaided by the influence of wealth, or of powerful friends, a stranger, the power of the State arrayed against him, backed by the most unrelenting hostility, appealed most touchingly to every ingenuous heart. Nothwithstanding all this, he sits before you calm and meek, his only consolation, a conscious innocence, and that if he fell beneath the pressure, which seemed so imminent, and crushing, he said it was for righteousness sake, and that his was the kingdom of heaven.

With such fearful odds to contend against, such a penalty, which he might be called to suffer, in the hearts of the jury, he would find a voice, quick and powerful, to effect his deliverance.

Upon the evidence of the witnesses, just introduced, so general and so vague, Burns remarked, that he would not for a moment dwell, but would come at once to the testimony of Bennet, and Justiniani, upon which, the learned district attorney triumphantly asks for a verdict of condemnation.

The life of my client, and what to him is dearer than life, is involved in this cause, and I shall, without fear or stint, attack those witnesses, and before I shall take my seat, I will satisfy you that their bitter hostility, their interest, all their passions, have rendered them unworthy of credit, and the story they have told, is a most wicked fabrication.

Burns dwelt on the character of his client, the evidence of the planters, their still unabated confidence in him, the letters which the indulgence of the court had permitted to be read, his vocation, his obedience to the command to go out into the highways and hedges, and invite the poor to the feast.

He then dwelt upon the improbability of this story, the futility of the attempt, on the part of Eaton, the madness and folly of the pretended scheme, and the fact, that the same story was told by these two men, influenced by similar passions, hatred and revenge,

paying money to counsel to aid the State, for the conviction of this poor defenceless stranger.

Then fixing his keen eyes upon the blanched countenance of Bennet, and the excited, yet wary face of Justiniani, he exclaimed, "Here, here is the evidence, stronger than a thousand witnesses, more potent than all the testimony, to convince you of the innocence of the accused.

"Here in their own handwriting, in this paper, which I hold in my hand, is evidence, 'confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ,' that Eaton is the victim of the foulest conspiracy." Here the whole frame of Bennet trembled like an aspen, and the dark swarthy face of Justiniani assumed an ashy paleness, for they had seen the paper, which Burns, with such triumph, his whole chest dilating with excitement, and his eye burning with fiery indignation, was then exhibiting. The writing which Burns held in his hand, and which was telling, with such terrible effect upon the principal witnesses, he all the while supposed was the paper for the employment of Lawson, signed by Bennet and Justiniani, and by it he expected to convince the jury of the deep interest these men felt in the result of the cause, and the improper step they adopted, for the conviction of Eaton. He had treated the paper he now held in his hand as an envelope of the agreement, and therefore entirely overlooked it, which by mistake had been handed to him by Bennet in his excitement as a witness.

The alarm and terror of Bennet and Justiniani in this denouement, scarcely equalled the surprise and gratification of the advocate, as he read to the astonished court and jury the following note written and signed as below.

"MR. BENNET—I trust you will be fully prepared for your examination, as a witness to-morrow in the case of the State, against Eaton. All the money we have expended and pains taken to procure his conviction, will prove unavailing, unless our testimony is fully credited. Be calm and collected, patient under cross examination—and tell your story just in the

words we have prepared it, and appear, as far as possible, to be entirely disinterested. My testimony will be the same as yours with slight variations; my position and profession will give such weight to our testimony, that the conviction and punishment of our mutual enemy will be sure. Our interests are one, and we must stand or fall upon the result of this cause.

In haste, your friend,

JUSTINIANI."

The excitement produced by reading this note, could with difficulty be restrained, for now the tables were turned, and poor Eaton, against whom the popular feeling had been aroused to such a pitch of excitement, at once became the object of deepest interest and favor.

When order had been restored, Burns, in a calm, and solemn manner, continued.

"How little did I dream, gentlemen, when charging upon these two witnesses, the authorship of a most foul and wicked conspiracy, that Providence had placed in my hand, this clear confirmation of the position that I had taken.

"'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.'

"I need detain you no longer, for I read in the expression of the face, in the deep indignation which all may see, is swelling the breast of him, who has presided over your deliberations, in the uncontrollable utterance of that still, small voice, which speaks to us from this large and respectable auditory, the result of this cause.

"I hear pronounced as by acclamation, the innocence of my client."

He had scarcely finished his address, and taken his seat, when the judge ordered the sheriff to take into custody, Bennet and Justiniani, but they had taken advantage of the excitement of the moment, and had made good their escape. The

district attorney declined to further prosecute the cause, the jury without leaving their seats, pronounced a unanimous verdict of acquittal. Paul Eaton, retired from the scene of this frightful ordeal, only the more intent upon the work of his master and to the congratulations of those around him, replied, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me."

CHAPTER VII.

THE return of Mr. Lefort, so anxiously awaited, by that now happy circle, imparted a joy and gladness all the more rapturous, as until now, he had never been separated from his beloved family, but during the passing of a few short hours. The pangs of separation, for weeks and months, from those, for whom, and in whom he lived, whose society was the solace and charm of his life, he had never felt. All his dreams of ambition, the passionate fondness with which, in earlier life, he had mingled in the fascinating and yet dangerous society of Paris, all were centered in the sweet and calm delights of his prairie home, and with a feeling of exultation, concealed it is true, did he now introduce to that charmed circle, to his wife, so lady-like and captivating in her manners, and to his daughters, the pride of his heart, the gifted and handsome young advocate, whose abilities and manners, and lofty tone and bearing, had so won upon his esteem and regard.

Supper being over, as is the custom in this most soft, balmy and delightful climate, all retired to seats upon the lawn, where Lefort, with his highly flavored cigar, usually passed an hour after the evening meal, in unreserved and delightful intercourse with his family.

It was the month of May, the heat of the midday sun, dissipated by the refreshing breeze, which at every sun-setting floats over these extended prairies from the gulf, gave place to a most delicious and invigorating, softly tempered atmosphere.

The moon rising full orbed from her ocean bed, was com-

mencing her stately march across the blue expanse, lighting up with soft and mellow radiance, a landscape, which nature with lavish hand, had adorned with wild and witching magnificence, and as if to laugh to scorn the artistic skill of man, had decked with flower and blossom, the sweetest and the loveliest, and making the whole scene living and vocal with the song of the mocking bird, which borne upon the stillness and hush of evening, seemed but an echo of the songs of the angels; and whose sweet silvery notes, ever varying, ever new, full of melody, cheered the long hours of night, and only ceased, when the song of the morning awaked from sweet repose the children of the prairie.

"I fear, Mr. Burns," said Louise, "that father has drawn too largely, upon your patience, in supposing that you would willingly give up, even for a few days, the excitement of business, the pleasures and gaieties of town life, for our quiet and rural retreat, but he is so in love with Oak Lawn himself, that he fancies, that it must appear an Eden to all who visit it."

"I have but one objection in accepting your father's kind and generous hospitality, Miss Lefort, which is, that my office and my room at the hotel, will be so irksome to me after enjoying, as I know I shall, to my heart's content, the pleasures of this most delightful retreat. And if all my poetical sentiments were not quite lost in pouring over dry and musty law books, I should say, that for more reasons than one, your father has rightly regarded his home as an Eden, inasmuch as no voice has driven from this beautiful garden its chief ornament."

"You are quite flattering, Mr. Burns; you may find our home so dull, so wanting in the excitement of your busy life, that you will welcome the hour that brings your visit to a close. My father will be delighted with your admiration of our home, for I really think, were he to-day to hear that he was restored to his honors, to the estates, which were unjustly wrested from him, he would hesitate long before he would exchange his new home, for

all the allurements, that wealth and fashion, and high position might offer for his acceptance."

"You are from New England; do tell us of that famed spot of which we have heard so much, and but for its cold wintry blasts, would seem so attractive as a home," said Louise.

"May there not be warm hearts, which the frost and the ice cannot reach, Miss Lefort?

"In the communion with such, in the society of the pure, the intellectual, the cultivated, with all that art and genius can furnish for the comfort and embellishment of life, think you, that the wintry blast, which bears on its wings the fleecy snows of December, can chill the enjoyments, which in such society and in such homes fill up the fleeting hours of human existence?"

"I know Mr. Burns, that your poetical imagination can paint in rosy hues, life, in any clime or country. But it seems to me, the very picture you have drawn of the enjoyment, the delights, which cluster around a home, that affluence has made so attractive, reminds us of the reverse of your charming picture, a home where penury and want exhibit the children of misfortune and sorrow, and that from that habitation, no care can shut out the chilling blasts, or light up, upon its hearth-stone, a cheering blaze, for the comfort and happiness of the members of such a household."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Blanche, as she saw him approaching, "I am so glad you have come to break up the sharp encounter of words, for I am sure their hearts are not in their conversation, between Louise and Mr. Burns, for they will either make our home, now so joyous, unhappy from comparison, or throw so many shadows, deep and dark, around life and its enjoyments, that I shall hardly dare taste of the bliss of the present, for fear that the future will dash the cup, ere it reaches my lips, or mingle with its sweets some poisonous ingredient."

"I plead guilty, Mr. Lefort, to the soft impeachment of Miss

Blanche; I am so new to the charms of social intercourse, so in the habit of delivering my opinions, and arguing all questions, that I quite forgot the conventionalities of society, but I shall throw myself for this, my first offence, upon the clemency of my fair accuser, and, if I am not mistaken, I read in her sweet smile, that mercy has tempered the sentence, and that I am forgiven."

"Be not too sure, Mr. Burns," Blanche archly replied, "that you will retire so easily from this charge, nor trust too much to the inexperience of your judge, for the only one of our sex, that I now recollect, who ever assumed the ermine, at her first trial called forth the expression of one of the contestants: 'O, wise and upright judge;' and gracious though she was, and full of the milk of human kindness, the sequel proved that the most unbending, unyielding justice, was the attribute, which so distinguished her.

"Fear you not then to trust yourself in such a court, and will you not rather decline its jurisdiction and say, as man once said, the woman gave me the apple (of discord), and upon Louise, who here is all powerful, place the blame of this controversy?"

"A truce to your wild badinage, my dear daughter; Mr. Burns will wish himself back to his books and his clients, if he is thus maltreated, upon his first introduction."

"Say rather, my dear sir, that I could wish my books and office here, that from such lips, distilling such eloquence, I might acquire a manner and a grace, which should be invincible, before all courts and juries."

In unrestrained and general conversation the hours flew swiftly away, and so hearty seemed the welcome extended to their young guest, so free from all restraint, such a desire that he should be happy, that ere the hour for retirement had come, he felt quite domesticated in the family of Mr. Lefort.

He was at last shown to his room, by a domestic, and he retired to think and dream of a family, who had already taken full possession of his esteem and regard.

After he had left, Lefort related in glowing terms, the manner in which Burns had defended Paul Eaton, the strong popular feeling which was excited against him; many sneeringly remarked, that being a northern man, with strong prejudices against the South and against slavery, of course he would defend an abolitionist, and that upon the conviction of Eaton, it might be well to advise his counsel that a planting neighborhood was illy suited to one, who entertained such opinions, as he held. And that when the district attorney had made his opening speech, which produced a strong effect, not only upon the court and jury, but upon a crowded court-house, he felt the greatest solicitude for young Burns, standing alone, opposed by able counsel and with an array of popular indignation, scarcely restrained. And then "the evidence seemed so clear, so conclusive, so uncontradicted, that had I stood in Burns' place, I fear I should have retired ingloriously from the field. But when the evidence was closed, and he rose to reply, his noble bearing, his manly straight-forward expressions, the honesty of purpose, standing out so prominently, his clear silver voice, ringing like a trumpet, his face glowing with intelligence, he spoke of the situation of his client, a stranger in a strange land, abandoning home, with all its endearments, willing to suffer persecution that he might preach the gospel to the poor and the degraded, and that now it seemed, he would wear the martyr's crown, his audience were melted, and the fiercest and most obdurate of the enemies of Eaton, began to think they had judged him too harshly. When he came to the testimony of the two principal witnesses, his eye burning with indignation, he fixed a withering glance upon them, and drew a picture of a plot, so true to nature, so malignant, and so apparently accordant with the evidence, that the conscience of Bennet must have told him of its correctness, for he writhed in his seat, and his face seemed as bloodless as a statue, and when he read a letter, handed him by *accident, written by* Justiniani to Bennet, a complete confirma-

tion of the scheme, as he had imagined it, he raised his large expressive eyes, from which all passion had subsided, and in tones of voice tremulous with emotion, ascribed to that Providence, which watched over the falling of a sparrow, the rescue of his client from an ignominious death. It was to my mind one of the clearest exhibitions of forensic eloquence, that I have ever witnessed, and it so wrought upon the mind and heart of the judge, that he thanked him from the bench, for having, by his manly and honorable conduct, saved them all from what might have been a most terrible and fatal mistake.

"The trial has secured for Burns a most enviable position and a weight of character, which men, who have grown grey in the profession, might well envy." Louise and Blanche had become so much interested, in the incidents of this trial, that they regretted that the clock had warned them of the hour for retirement.

"He is a fascinating man, is he not, Louise? and so handsome too, how I wish he lived near us, that we might enjoy his society."

"Why you have hardly seen him, dear Blanche, how do you know, but when annoyed by the cares of business, he may be morose and gloomy, and discontented with his adopted home, and will associate with it, those whom he finds about it, and regard them as he does that residence, with feelings akin to aversion. I do not approve of likes and dislikes at first sight, and though I agree with you, that his face and manners are nearly faultless, I would like to know more of him, before I make up my mind, that he is all that your imagination would paint him."

And thus did these young charming ladies scan the character of their guest, till wrapped in sleep, scenes and persons faded from all remembrance.

Day after day was the visit of Burns prolonged. In the morning he found new excuses, to break the resolution, he had formed at night, for *taking his* departure. Some new scenes were to be

explored, some neighbors to be visited, and he was so politely and winningly invited, that resistance was quite vain.

A week had thus flown swiftly away, and now, all farewells having been spoken, and assurances that nothing would afford him so much pleasure, as a renewal of his visit, he set off with a somewhat heavy heart from Oak Lawn, for his home, his books, and the duties of his profession.

CHAPTER VIII.

Soon after the establishment of Lefort in his new home in Louisiana, Frank and Charles Grafton purchased and took possession of a plantation at Côte Blanche, an island upon the Gulf of Mexico, in distance, about a day's journey from Oak Lawn. As these parties will figure somewhat largely in the story we are relating, we shall devote a few pages in delineating their characters.

Descended from an ancient and highly respectable stock in Virginia, Frank and Charles were left, while children, with an ample patrimony to the care of a distant relative. Frank was a handsome, manly boy, and although but nine years of age, was remarkable for his intelligence, his bold and fearless demeanor. His keen, dark eye, while it revealed by its flashes the great superiority of his intellect, at the same time manifested, even to the most casual observer, the fiery passions which were glowing in his bosom. He was even now a most fascinating boy, and under the culture, required by such a nature, no one could but perceive that he must ever take a prominent position among his fellows. The lineaments of the handsome face, the qualities of mind and heart which were presented by his brother Charles, but two years his junior, were strikingly dissimilar. The sweetness of his open, smiling face appealed most touchingly even to a stranger, and while it told of the fountain of goodness that was springing at his heart, assured you, also, that he was gifted with no ordinary intellectual *capacity*. Differently moulded, each of them

possessed those rare characteristics which betokened for them a career of great distinction. A large but strangely selected library, by the indulgence of their uncle, was thrown open to them. They could satisfy their curiosity by the pictures presented to the eye, or feed their youthful fancies with tales of the marvellous, or the touching, in the books that were spread out before them. The strong and stern nature of Frank selected the story of some bold, daring, and reckless chief, who, at the head of his clan, would make a most hazardous, yet successful foray upon his neighbors, and carrying off, to his mountain retreat, the beauty and booty, which his valor and prowess had won, would give themselves up to wild revelry and riot. Charles, on the other hand, would be feasting his young fancy upon some touching ballad; his eyes now overflowing with tears at the plaintive recital, and anon, his bright, face gleaming with joy, as he read the agreeable denouement of the story before him. Their uncle had employed for them a tutor, who was rather to direct and influence their pursuits, than to enforce a proper, mental culture. Fortunately he was a man of heart, as well as mind. Engaging in his disposition, and deeply interested in the welfare of the boys, who had been entrusted to his care and guidance, he employed every means to rightly educate them. The acute and vigorous mind of Frank, the rare genius which he thus early displayed, awakened for him a powerful interest in his tutor; but the affectionate nature, the sweet and docile temper of Charles, and his wonderful aptitude for the acquisition of learning, made him unwittingly the favorite with the teacher. This, the quick eye of Frank discovered, and though he did not manifest his perception of the fact, it led him to act upon his own impulses, as far as possible, and to lend an unwilling ear to the advice of his mentor.

That they might grow up with strong and vigorous constitutions, Frank and Charles were each furnished with a horse and servant, and gun; and the peculiarities of the boys might be

seen in the servants and the horses they selected. Frank would have a steed of a fiery nature, whose blood he could trace back to a pedigree, unrivalled for fleetness and beauty, and who, by his flashing eye and pawing foot, manifested impatience under all restraint; and his servant, though devoted to his young master, and obedient to his every wish, lent an unwilling, sullen ear to the commands, or the request, even, of another, and plainly revealed by his intelligence and independence, that other blood than that of the sable African coursed wildly through his veins. Charles, on the contrary, mounted upon a handsome and well-bred charger, required docility only, and while he started off, his horse fully caparisoned, his trained and affectionate servant, loaded down with all the implements for the chase, they might be found, ere the sun had reached the zenith, beneath some wide-spreading beach, Charles poring over a pleasant book, while Pedro, having taken good care of the horses, was preparing the nice repast he had provided, when summoned in the morning to make ready for the day's excursion. Under the guidance of their teacher, each rapidly acquired the rudiments of learning and science; their taste for books was cultivated and increased, and few of the histories or biographies of the library but were thoroughly read and mastered under the silent influence of him to whose training their young minds had been committed. Reared in affluence, with no one to exercise any particular control of them, they grew up to manhood, the one, imperious, haughty, and skeptical, the other, most genial in his disposition, and possessed of those graces of mind and heart, which make the perfection of character.

Time had, with rapid wings, brought them to that period of manhood, when, for good or for evil, they must start out upon the great arena of life. There appeared now in the character of Frank Grafton, traits perfectly enigmatical. He would at times charm you with those lofty and beautiful sentiments, which so

flow upon the pages of Addison and Cowper, and at the same time you could perceive lurking beneath it all, a cynical sneer, as if such thoughts were but the wild and fanciful dreams of the poet, or the baseless vagaries of genius. He possessed apparently a most indomitable spirit. To will, with him was the accomplishment of his object, and wo betide the person, who had roused the stormy passions of his nature. He laughed at difficulties; and most of the trials, and the sorrows, which encompass the path of humanity, excited within his stern bosom, emotions nearer akin to contempt, than pity. In scenes of real danger, when the hearts of most men stand still, and the faces of the bravest are blanched with fear, he was ever calm, collected and fearless. The more imminent the peril, the more cool and intrepid the conduct that seemed to delight to cope with it, and conquer; and yet at some comparatively trivial incident, as the rushing suddenly upon him, or a person standing at his bedside, masked, in white, would terribly excite his whole nervous system, and his stout frame would quiver, as in an agony of fear. His acute and vigorous mind seized with an unyielding grasp whatever impressed his imagination, and a memory, wonderfully retentive, laid up for use or amusement, all the ideas, and frequently, the very words of a favorite author. According to his mood, he would at times attack the faith of those with whom he might be conversing with the malignant sneers of infidelity, and on another occasion would perfectly annihilate some flippant scoffer, by the power of his arguments, and the bitterness of his sarcasm. His temper was equally uncertain. For a trifling disobedience he would sometimes punish with the most unrelenting cruelty, a domestic who had served him with entire fidelity, and been a favorite with him from childhood, while at the bedside of another, who in health was ever sullen and disobedient, he would devote himself with all the care of long friendship, and the involuntary look and act of distress, would tell *the deep sympathy* be entertained for the sufferer.

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK had met and become enamored of a pure and lovely being, a Miss Helen Marshall. He was most assiduous in his attentions, and though her youthful fancy was most favorably impressed by the face and figure, the elegance of manner and wonderful conversational powers of her enthusiastic admirer, she had occasionally listened to him unobserved, and seen the effusions of her own true and gentle spirit seared by the withering ridicule which he poured upon purity and truth. The more devoted he became, the more unwilling appeared Helen to receive his attentions. The intense ardor of his nature was aroused and excited by opposition, and he would not permit himself to believe that any object was for him impossible of accomplishment. He proposed, and was refused. "Ah!" said he to himself in his solitary chamber, "the lovely and beautiful Helen Marshall has declined the acceptance of my hand. 'The offer was disdained and love denied.' I did not know till now that I really desired to marry her or any one. It was but a youthful passing fancy, but now she seems the sole object of my desire. The conquest would be of little value, if there were to be no toil, no struggle. Our tastes, she said, were so unlike, our sentiments so dissimilar, she highly esteemed me, but could not love. I will change my tactics, my attentions shall hereafter be as devoted as ever, yet a thousand times more delicate. I will learn to discourse upon the beauties of virtue, the charms of excellence. The faith which, as she exhibits it, I admit is lovely, shall find me its efficient cham-

pion. Most winningly will I woo her, will persuade this young scornful beauty, that her friendship will lure me back to the paths of right thinking and acting, and tell her of the strange influence her sweet example has in elevating my principles and conduct. I will fascinate her, and when she fancies me to be strong in faith and pure in sentiment, by a little coolness I will make her feel that I am necessary to her. Why listen to the foolish fears of a love-sick spirit, and despair when the field is all open and fair before me? My heart goes hand in hand with my pride; the one would pine the other chafe under the blighting effects of a final rejection. Why, did not Richard, crooked in soul and person, win the love of Lady Anne even while he told her that he slew her husband, and when she was following the bleeding corse of the murdered Henry to its burial? I have struck at the beauteous form of that religion to whose shrine her pure and gentle spirit brought its earliest and freshest offerings, but I did not overthrow it, and can I not, when she fancies me talking to other ears, array it in loveliest garb, and build around it its strongest fortresses, as if the sentiments of my heart had all been moulded anew, and fashioned after the pattern of her own bright example?"

Such were the reflections of Frank Grafton, and his conduct corresponded with the views he entertained. Mrs. Linton, the aunt with whom Helen had always lived, and now her only relative, was violently attacked by that insidious disease, which hurries to the tomb the loveliest and the fairest; those whose life seems most precious. All the fears and apprehensions of Helen were awakened, and everywhere she sought relief and alleviation. For Mrs. Linton, Frank was unwearied in his efforts. He was ever ready, rendering those gentle, unobtrusive attentions so grateful to one sick and suffering. Hardly a wish was expressed for some delicacy, rare, and at the season of the year with difficulty obtained—at the next visit of Frank, it was presented to the gratified acceptance of Mrs. Linton. She fancied for the moment that

her own carriage was unsafe, Frank's was at the door with his skillful coachman. Mrs. Linton would suffer anxiety that so much confinement was chasing the bloom from Helen's cheek. Frank who had long been almost domesticated at Mrs. Linton's, could while away a few hours by reading some favorite author, while Helen was enjoying her pleasing and necessary horseback excursion.

And all this time he made not an allusion even, to the passion which was warm and glowing at his heart. An observer would have supposed them upon the most intimate footing of friendship. The quick eye of the aunt even failed to discern the love which was really prompting all this devotion. She remarked to Helen the great changes which seemed to have taken place in the views and character of Frank, and how grateful to her were those attentions which appeared so disinterested. "I thought, Helen, at one time, that he was playing the lover and seeking to enchain your affections by the fascination of his accomplished address and his elegant person."

The blush which mantled upon the snowy cheek of Helen well-nigh revealed the secret which she had confided to no one, while her aunt supposed that she might now be feeling the attractions of one so cultivated as was her lover. Frank Grafton found in Mrs. Linton a most useful ally. She was eloquent in her praise of his various accomplishments, and unwittingly removed the very objections which had prompted Helen in the course she had taken, when she declined the offer he had made her. The strength of Mrs. Linton had been rapidly giving way, and in an unexpected moment she fell beneath the blow of the Destroyer. Helen's heart and home were now desolate; she felt the soothing influences of Frank's attentions; his society had been almost necessary to her. He had been absent, spending some time in Richmond. The changed manner, the delicate attentions, the conversation, and more than all, the unwearied kindness, which he had displayed during

the illness of her aunt, had made a strong and most favorable impression upon her guileless mind, and manifested how well he was acquainted with the workings of the human heart.

His proud nature, she said to herself, would not permit him to renew a proposal, which had once been rejected. He seemed bent upon making me feel the power of his enchantment. At times, when I knew his expressive eye was fixed upon me, as if he were reading the very thoughts of my soul, upon my detection of him, his face would reveal an interest altogether unmistakable, but by some casual unimportant remark, he would at once evidently seek to do away the impression. His smile is so bewitching, so courteous; so civil is all his conduct, every word and act so marked with gentleness and grace, that I almost forget that harsh and haughty manner once so freezing and disagreeable. Surely he has greatly changed. I durst not ask my heart what changes have there been wrought.

Upon the return of Frank he met Helen by accident as she was returning from a ride. She never appeared to him so lovely. The exhilarating exercise had imparted color to her cheek, and animation to her spirits, and she received him in that cordial manner so grateful to one after long absence. His long pent up passion would be restrained no longer.

"Vainly have I endeavored, Miss Marshall, to obey your injunctions, and blot from my memory the hour when I dared to tell you of my love. The more hopeless appeared my prospects, the more intense and strong was the affection with which I regarded you. I know you think me passionate, cruel. For weeks have I closely watched and studied your feelings toward myself, not in your words or conduct, the expression of your eye, the lightest word and remark, and all have told me that you know little of the true character of him, who adores you. My moody fits, passionate expressions even would all be forgotten, but I know the *great*, the fatal objection. You have believed me skeptical, a

scorner of that faith, which appears so beautiful as exhibited by yourself. Upon this rock have all my hopes and fondest anticipations been shipwrecked. Already have my views and feelings changed, as I have watched your daily example, and might not you win me to that faith and trust which shines with so benignant a ray in all your conduct? Will you not, dear Helen, be mine? Drive me not to hopeless wretchedness and despair, by the refusal of a heart all your own."

The suffused eye, the sweet smile that beamed upon her blushing face was more expressive than words, and the permitted kiss told the enthusiastic lover that his prayer was granted, that she would be his for ever.

Our readers will pardon us if we hurry on the further courtship and marriage of Frank and Helen, and leave to their own imaginations this interesting portion of their history. We will accompany them to their new home in Louisiana, a description of which will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER X.

Côte Blanche, derives its name from the long line of white coast, which stretches out upon the Gulf of Mexico. It will be borne in mind that this portion of the State was almost entirely peopled by emigration from France, and the French colonies. The tri-colored flag was far more familiar, if not more dear to the eyes of those, who first settled this beautiful and fertile section, than the stars and stripes, the emblem of the government, which had recently displaced the authority of France and Spain. The habits and manners of the people, their patriarchal laws, their customs and their religion were all borrowed from the Gallic nation.

The primitive simplicity of the inhabitants, their love of ease and quiet, their peaceful dispositions, their calm, contented and happy lives, beautifully contrasted with the restless anxiety, the eager propensity for gain, the turbulence and discontent, which were the characteristics of their American neighbors. A blending of the active enterprise of the one with the too quiet but good sense of the other, was necessary for the development of the vast resources of this most opulent region.

Isolated from the shore of the Gulf, the little Isle of Côte Blanche reared its snowy and fertile bosom, high above the waters which sparkled at its base. The magnificent growth of underwood, the fruitful vines climbing up the tall magnolias, the rank waving grasses, shaded by the immense live oaks, which invited the wearied mariner to come in from the burning sun, and recline

upon the soft and fragrant couch, all indicated how rich must be the soil from which put forth such luxuriant vegetation.

Nature, in one of her wayward and generous freaks, seems to have selected a spot, scattered over it her most productive mould, fanning it by those soft and gentle breezes from the sea, which softens the rays of a tropical sun, and drives away the frosts of winter; and as if her generosity had been now suddenly stinted, some hundreds of acres was the extent she would provide for this garden upon the deep.

The imaginative mind of Helen glowed with enthusiastic delight, as seated with her husband and Charles Grafton upon the verandah of their neat and commodious cottage, she feasted her eyes and ears with the views and voices which seemed welcoming her coming.

She was struck by the singular contrast existing between her present home, and the dear, well-remembered spot, where the bright happy years of childhood and youth were passed. The scenery how strangely different. Here stretched out before her eye one wide extensive field, upon which the tall stocks of corn and cane lifted their heads as if in rivalry. The broad expanse was relieved of its tiresome appearance by beautiful copses, which for use, as well as ornament, were permitted to grow in various spots upon the plantation. The only elevation that ever gladdened the vision, might be seen upon the surface of the Gulf, when furious winds were piling up, like Pelion upon Ossa, wave upon wave, whose whitened foam, tossed by the raging elements, was no mean representation of the snows, driven by the winter's blast.

For one who had been reared in the midst of scenery such as is exhibited in the counties of Virginia lying beneath the Blue Ridge, the change, indeed, was wonderful. The clear and beautiful streams, the magnificent waterfalls, hill and vale of almost unrivalled beauty, she had been so accustomed to behold, that the wondrous charm, created by magnificent scenery, had been, in a

great measure, lost. But now that the wide level of sea and land which ever stretched out before her, became tiresome to the eye, she could not but sigh for one more view of those lovely landscapes, so diversified and so numerous, which had adorned the home of her childhood.

"What pleasure would it afford me," said Blanche to herself, "once more to look down from that dizzy height into the dark abyss of boiling waters, as I have often done from that rocky bridge, which nature hath built across the yawning chasm; or to behold that grandest spectacle in all the works of God, the passage of the Potomac through the iron-bound sides of the Blue Ridge. But my happiness is not dependent upon scenery, at least I can find sufficient here to gratify the wishes of any reasonable person."

Côte Blanche, the residence of Helen, now became to her the happiest spot that her fancy even had ever painted. The solitude of her home was brightened by the presence of one, whose voice, to her ear, was sweeter and more fascinating than the most witching strains of melody. She was now a mother. Her happiness knew no limit or abatement, as she daily watched the unfolding of this sweet flower. Her heart, which from earliest childhood, had felt the desolation which had darkened it in the rending of all kindred ties, now thrilled with a new joy as her sweet babe was nestling upon her bosom. Heretofore, when witnessing the delightful exhibitions of parental love, or the warm outgushings of a sister's or brother's affection, she had sighed, that to her it had never been given to taste the bliss flowing from such emotions. One void in her aching heart had never been supplied. One wish, deep down in the innermost chamber of her soul, had remained ungratified. Her affectionate nature, overflowing with the noblest and warmest impulses, sought, with a craving that could not be denied, an object upon which she might lavish *all her love.* And now, as she looked into the bright blue eyes of

her darling Ida, and saw her own image reflected in the speaking face before her, life had for her a charm and an object, before unknown.

Emma, a servant that had been given to Helen in early childhood, a girl of uncommon intelligence, regarded, with an affection, second only to that of the mother's, the child of her mistress. With an assuming air, and as if endowed with a superior skill or knowledge, she would take upon herself the care and nursing of it. Half reprovingly would she look upon Helen, as in the fondness and anxiety of first maternal love, she would kiss into wakefulness its quiet slumbers, as if envious of sleep, in whose soft and close embrace her darling was reposing.

"Oh, Mrs. Helen, do let little Ida sleep. You bring her to me, and tell me that she is so fretful that you are afraid she is sick, when nothing is the matter of her, and she cries because you will wake her."

"Why, Emma, you put on great airs since the birth of Ida. What do you know about children? I waked her because I thought she was ill, her face was flushed, and she was so unquiet."

"Why, Mistress, I had just sung her to sleep, and you must wake her to see if she breathes. Master Frank says you will kill her with kindness; that if he was in Virginia, he would send her off to old Mrs. Norvel to bring her up."

"Your master would do great things. But we are not in Virginia, and old Mrs. Norvel's cottage is many a long mile from here, so we will not be annoyed by fears from that quarter. Emma, put little Ida in her carriage and accompany me in my walk upon the sea-shore, now that the sun is declining; the fresh sea breeze will invigorate her. I wish she looked as rosy and strong as those children playing about the fisherman's dwelling."

CHAPTER XI.

"TELL me, Blanche," said Louise, "who was that lovely being that enchanted every one by her exquisite music at the party last evening. Though not a regular beauty, so fascinating and bewitching was her manner that all seemed irresistibly attracted to her."

"It was Mrs. Helen Grafton," replied Blanche. "Mr. Burns desired me to make her acquaintance and spoke of her in most exalted terms. Gladly I availed myself of his offer to introduce us."

"How did you like her, Blanche?"

"Oh, she was charming. The playfulness of her wit at once delights you. Her appreciation of character is wonderful, and the originality of her conversation so surprising, that she well deserved the high encomium of Mr. Burns."

We will stop for a moment our narrative, that we may introduce to our readers Mrs. Grafton, as she will play no insignificant part in the tale we are telling. Helen Marshall, now Mrs. Grafton, had never known a mother's love, and before she could appreciate the doating fondness of her father, he was summoned to join the mother in a happier world. She had been nurtured in the family of a distant relative, with a care and tenderness little less than that bestowed by parental love. She possessed a most noble and generous disposition. She was tall, with something in her air and manner that at once commanded esteem and respect. To those who knew her intimately, before when she threw off all restraint, she manifested a warmth and depth of affection that

seemed hardly to belong to one of her reserved habits. She had peculiar powers of sarcasm. The play of her wit, so keen and yet so kind, that although it stung for a moment its victim, the sweet smile of good-nature, which so illuminated her handsome features, speaking in the very words which wounded, was so healing, that no rankling or heart-burning was left in the bosom, at which the playful arrow had been directed. She was passionately fond of music, and greatly excelled in this accomplishment. In singing, her full rich voice was so completely modulated, and so expressive of the sentiment of the song, her execution so perfect, so full of feeling, that as she raised her large blue eyes, her face lighted up and glowing, she seemed to be the very soul of melody.

No pains had been spared in her education, and scarcely a want ungratified. It was amusing to see the imperious manner with which, while yet a child, she treated a slave, named Emma, nearly of her own age, which had been given her in early childhood. "You will recollect," she would say, "that you are to wait upon me, that I am your mistress, and I do not want to see you in the soiled kitchen-dress like the other servants." And then she would array her little waiting-maid with the greatest care and taste, and, seated by her side, would praise the large lustrous eyes and snowy teeth of her favorite and constant attendant. Always accompanying Helen in her walks, joining her in her amusements and listening with eagerness to the stories, which it delighted the youthful Helen to read to her from her juvenile books, she grew up with tastes and manners formed upon those of her mistress. Of Indian descent, her long black hair, her clear olive complexion, her erect and handsome figure, and the grace of her movements would have led one to suppose that she was of Spanish origin. The kindness on the part of Helen, and the devoted affectionate interest, which Emma ever manifested in all that concerned her young mistress, created a bond of mutual regard of the strongest character.

Arriving at the age of seventeen, Helen had met with Frank Grafton, a young gentleman highly prepossessing in his personal appearance. Strikingly original, with wit, keen and polished as a Damascus blade, a memory stored with the choicest gems of poetry, he made himself, wherever and whenever he chose to be, a decided favorite. In the full freedom of unrestrained conversation, he had exhibited characteristics, which though they might be startling and fascinating, were yet so fearful, that Helen sometimes shuddered at the power Frank Grafton possessed over her. He would often sneer at the beautiful morality, which Helen had been taught to love from her childhood. Again and again, as if from mere waywardness, when in company with young gentlemen, led on by himself, they would join in his ridicule of religion, and attempt to assail the evidences of its genuineness by the oft refuted arguments of infidelity, he would turn upon them a look of withering scorn, and by the most original and powerful replies, would place as upon a rock, the foundations upon which the Bible rested. "Let the scoffer," he would say, "give us something better in its place, before he shall take away the last plank left for poor shipwrecked humanity." Young as he was, he was steeped in misanthropy. His heart had been corroded by communion with infidel writers, and he indulged its wild cravings to linger about the dark spots, which the spirit of evil has created for our fallen humanity.

CHAPTER XII.

Helen Grafton had accepted an invitation from Mrs. Lefort, and had passed a few days most delightfully at Oak Lawn. The pure and exalted sentiments, which shone conspicuously in her conduct, her kind and obliging disposition, her dignified bearing, and sparkling conversation, caused her society to be sought in every circle. The somewhat singular and striking contrast, between her hair, black as the raven's wing, and her large eyes of heavenly blue, and a complexion, the blending of the rose and lily, was, in the estimation of the dark-eyed handsome Creoles, a great beauty. Her chiefest ornament, perhaps, and manifesting high birth, was her hand, which, as she ran her graceful taper fingers over the keys of the piano, or along the strings of the harp, displayed a symmetry and perfection, most marked and elegant. She was charmed with the frank and courteous manners, the kind and generous hospitality, which welcomed her so warmly at Oak Lawn.

At her urgent request, and with the promise of Charles Grafton, to return with her after a few days' stay, Blanche Lefort accompanied Mrs. Grafton on her return to her home upon the Gulf.

The enthusiastic nature of Blanche was highly delighted by the romantic spot, now the residence of Mrs. Grafton. They had reached it just at the close of day. The sun-setting so reminded her of those marvellous exhibitions of beauty and grandeur, which she had seen as they were crossing the sea: the great orb of day sinking apparently beneath the blue wave, and at its parting, the

reflection of his rays pouring over the western horizon a flood of golden light, while on the eastern sky the pale moon was mounting her brilliant car, and commencing her nightly journey, even before the day had come to its close. Their occupations and pleasures were equally varied by rides in the neighborhood, and by charming excursions upon some one of the numerous bays, which here indent the coast, in the tasteful yacht of Charles, which he said, he greatly preferred to a lumbering carriage, as his sea-horses were so readily harnessed to his car, and did not mar the enjoyment of his journey by any exhibitions of fatigue.

But the visit of Blanche was destined to have a most sad termination, for in the midst of all their enjoyment, calamity in its darkest form had come, a most unwelcome guest, to intrude upon the happiness of this joyous circle. Grateful indeed and soothing was the presence of Blanche, for Helen was now doomed to taste the cup of affliction in its bitterest form, and to the very dregs. Côte Blanche, which in the hour of happiness Helen had described as an elysium, was to her eye hereafter to wear the drapery of desolation. Her darling Ida, the idol of her soul, suddenly sickened, and so violent was the attack, that even hope fled from the bosom of her mother. Convulsion followed convulsion, in rapid succession, till the strength of the little sufferer gave way, and she lay hovering between life and death, and who could tell which should conquer.

Involved in that frightful struggle were all the bright hopes, which had so lately gilded the horizon of the beautiful and gifted Helen. If the destroyer was successful, then would the long night of darkness brood over her being, till the morning of an everlasting day should dawn upon her spirit, introducing her again to the loved and lost in heaven. How vain to attempt a description of those torturing moments, when affection, fixing its tear-dimmed eye upon its most cherished object, would fain do something to ward off the fatal arrow. But its unerring flight no mortal power

could arrest. In the morning, little Ida was the picture of health, at evening's close, she was reposing in the sleep of death. "How true to nature the picture of the psalmist," said Blanche. "In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth." But this sweet flower, dear Helen, shall bloom again in pristine beauty in those pure, bright climes, where sorrow and suffering are unknown. "And now," said Helen, "my only desire is that soon again I may see my Ida, who, with my sainted father and mother, will bid me welcome to their heavenly home."

CHAPTER XIII.

The singular and strange waywardness of Frank Grafton was now strikingly manifested in his conduct towards Emma.

At times he was most lavish in his kindness. The presents he made her, and the thousand nameless acts of generosity with which he soothed her while suffering during a raging fever, all denoted that he regarded her with sentiments of the most heartfelt kindness.

And he would speak of her devotion to Helen, of her unwearied, affectionate and faithful conduct, as she watched over, and nursed their darling Ida, of the deep grief which agonized her heart, when this bright blossom was transplanted from earth, to mature in the Paradise of God, that you could not but suppose that he would guard her well being, with all the care of the tenderest interest. All this kindness was reciprocated by the most grateful conduct on the part of Emma. She studied to anticipate every wish of her master, and by most assiduous care to promote his comfort; and now, without a reason, his whole conduct and bearing toward Emma changed.

He repulsed, with icy coldness, all attempts on her part, to propitiate his favor, ordering her from the room, whenever he entered it, telling Helen that he was tired of the very sight of Emma, and reproaching her for her partiality for the servant, and that it was known and felt by all the slaves, rendering them discontented and disobedient.

For some trifling neglect on the part of Emma, rudely and

violently he seized her, thrust her from the house, and compelled her to work during the day on the plantation, taunting her with her lady manners, her gay finery, and with cruel bitterness alluded to her color, as if she was the offspring of disgrace.

All this Emma bore uncomplainingly, thinking that by more constant endeavor to please him, by not thwarting him in his conduct, and from the love he seemed to bear her mistress, his cruel persecutions would cease.

Helen's intercessions, so far from effecting a favorable change in the conduct of her husband, seemed but to aggravate his outrageous and causeless cruelty. He came home in the afternoon, bringing with him a grim, hard-featured, disgusting looking man, ordering Emma to present herself, and submitted her to the inspection of this heartless trader, asking him what he would pay for her.

With gloating eyes he surveyed the fair proportions of the faithful, modest Emma; and as he carelessly attempted to put his arm around her waist, she cast upon him a look of the most withering scorn and contempt, bidding him touch her at his peril.

"Ah, my beauty," said Craven, "you are just the girl for the New Orleans market. These lofty airs have raised you a cool five hundred in value, for I know a fellow in Mississippi, once an overseer, who now counts his slaves by hundreds, who would consider you a jewel of a creature, and would take you, let the price be ever so exorbitant. I will take her, Squire Grafton, at $1500; she is good for nothing, except as a fancy piece, but dainty chaps will pay for these expensive luxuries."

Emma rushed from the room, and sought her mistress that she might save her from the cruel fate which was impending over her. She found her at the grave of Ida, which she had been decorating with the wild rose and cedar.

"Save me, O, save me, mistress. What have I done to provoke such unheard *of cruelty* as master now threatens me with?

"He has sold me to a wretch, a negro trader, of New Orleans, who buys me for some disgusting, brutish creature in Mississippi. I had rather die a thousand deaths, than to submit for a moment to the vile and hateful liberties of such devils in human shape; and the bare idea of being separated from you, rends my heart with bitterest anguish."

"Fear not, Emma. Mr. Grafton cannot be serious; he knows that you are mine, and that nothing would induce me to part with you. From my earliest infancy, you have been my kind and faithful attendant, and before my marriage, arrangements were made, that at my death, you were to be free, and entirely, solely mine, during my life."

Helen hurried to the apartment, where sat her husband and Craven. The expression upon the face of the latter revealed at once the degraded and degrading occupation, by which he fitted himself for the abode of those dark evil spirits of Milton's Pandemonium,

> "Who roving on,
> In confused march, this adventurous band,
> With shuddering horror, pale, and eyes aghast,
> Viewed first their lamentable lot, and found
> No rest."

He rose, and was about to address Helen, when waving him back, with the most indignant scorn, she spoke to her husband as if no one were present.

"How can you, Mr. Grafton, find it in your heart, thus to distress so good, and so true a girl as Emma? Surely her conduct, ever the most respectful, her efforts incessant, to meet even your unexpressed wishes, entitles her to your kindest consideration; and, O, how great has been her devotion, her affectionate, sleepless anxiety and care, her unwearied toil, her kind, affectionate sympathy, when she sought to cheer your despondency, in that hour when our loved Ida sickened, and 'the silver cord was loosed,

the golden bowl was broken.' Then, husband, in that hour of deepest, darkest sorrow, you appreciated the goodness and tenderness of Emma. You are not, you cannot be serious when you speak of selling to any one, much more to a wicked, heartless trader, one, who has been reared with the greatest care and tenderness."

Grafton sat as if transfixed by the touching and eloquent appeal of Helen. His capricious disposition now suffered torture from the course he had taken.

Craven, fearful of the effect of this scene, and apprehensive lest he might loose the advantage of his bargain, rose, and taking from his hat the bill of sale, which Grafton had given him, declared that he had paid fifteen hundred dollars for this girl; that here was his title, and that it took two to make a trade, and as many to unmake it, when once consummated.

"Wretch!" said Helen, "how dare you pollute this house by your presence? Those horrid slave-pens, which have witnessed your wicked cruelties, and which will testify against you at a higher than a human tribunal, are the only fit abodes for creatures of your calling."

Grafton interposed, and besought Craven to give up the trade, to receive back the money he had paid for Emma, that indeed the title was invalid, as by his marriage contract Emma was expressly reserved as the individual property of his wife, and free from any interference on his part.

But the artful, cunning slave-trader was not thus to be foiled. He said he would risk his title, that the warranty of Grafton was sufficient, and that in Mississippi they cared little for these questions, as there was no difficulty in concealing from all judicial pursuit, a slave that was highly desirable. That she could be kept as long as she was valuable, and when tired of the trade, the owner would throw her back upon the hands of the seller, on account of the invalidity of the sale by which she was transferred.

to him. He would now take his leave, and in the morning would call for the girl that was fairly his by purchase.

At the departure of this Spirit of evil, Helen seemed almost stupefied with the blow which had fallen with deadly weight upon her heart.

She could not believe the evidence of her senses. She was almost frenzied by this uncalled-for, unnecessary act of horrid barbarity. Her husband was alarmed by the highly excited, and almost distracted manner of Helen. He said his only resource was to follow Craven to New Orleans, and at once, in her name, institute legal proceedings to annul the sale, he had so inconsiderately, so thoughtlessly made, of Emma.

"Oh, Grafton, I cannot bear that Emma should, for an instant, be in the custody of that wicked, heartless creature. He will contrive some plan to circumvent us. Money will be used, and no pains spared to gratify his malice. Emma—poor Emma, who has ever been treated with the utmost care and tenderness—whose feelings would revolt as soon as my own, at contact with that loathsome lump of wickedness—she will be at his mercy. Better, better far had she died in that delirious fever, from which she has so recently been rescued, than to have seen the light of this day of desolation, and living death.

Oh, Emma, dear Emma, to what terrible fate have I exposed you, in bringing you from our peaceful home in Virginia, to this abode of wretchedness, of deep and dark despair!"

CHAPTER XIV.

UNFOLD we the dark web, that fate had woven for the sorrowing, yet sinless.

Oh, how little is known of the heart of the faithful slave! How incorrect the general idea in regard to their intelligence. Books have not taught them, but this very want has awakened curiosity, and vivified and enkindled it; given such new force and power to observation, and so quickened the imitative power of these downtrodden children, that one is often surprised by the simple, touching and beautiful expressions of mind and heart, even of those on whose necks are hanging the chains of slavery. God has gilded these chains, which man has made of iron, in vouchsafing docile, cheerful dispositions, warm and affectionate natures, hopeful, happy, and contented hearts, amidst privations and sorrows, whispered only in the ear of Infinite Love!

Weep not, Emma, sigh not for the freedom of the bird which chirps upon your window-sill; your true heart is free from the slavery of sin! The swift wing of time shall soon bear your free, untrammeled, spirit to those bright realms where oppression is unknown!

Emma in her anxiety to know her fate had, unperceived, followed the flying footsteps of her mistress, and through a half opened door had heard the conversation, which we have related in the foregoing chapter.

Hope died within her. She could see no deliverance from the terrible fate, which awaited her.

To be separated from her mistress, whom she loved most fondly,

and to submit to cruelties on the part of Craven, which imagination could scarely conceive, was an excess of torture, sufficient to unsettle the strongest intellect.

"For me—there is no refuge, no escape, but in death," said Emma to herself. "And why should I fear its cold embrace. My own anxiety, when, a few weeks since, fever was burning up my very life blood, and the portals of the grave were opening before me, was, that I should leave alone, and wretched, my mistress. The waves of the gulf are not more destitute of pity, than the hearts of men, and its deepest abysses not so frightful, as the habitations of cruelty! God will pardon me, in thus escaping from the horrid fate, for which Craven, the slave-trader, has reserved me."

She wrote a note to her mistress, full of love, thanking her for the kind and generous treatment, she had ever received at her hands, forgiving Mr. Grafton for the act, which had left for her, this only refuge, and asking him, as a last favor, that she might be buried by the side of the beautiful Ida, whose eyes, a few weeks since, she had closed for ever. All the little mementoes of kindness she had received, she carefully packed away, and a beautiful ringlet of the hair of Ida, that Helen had given her as a keep-sake, was tastefully sealed up, with moss-rose, and cypress, while the snowy paper revealed the interest of Emma, as tears had left their traces upon the highly prized treasure. Helen was surprised at the calm, unruffled manner of Emma, she appeared so remarkably tender and docile, and with as little unconcern, as if about to undertake a journey. Calmly, quietly, did she wait upon her mistress, and with the greatest care, attended to all her wants as she retired. Once or twice she came back to the chamber of Helen, apparently to perform some neglected duty, while her heart was throbbing with intensest emotion, as she looked upon the face of her earliest and most dearly loved friend.

It was morning. The delicious breeze from the Gulf was *awaking from sweet* repose, the wearied, but now refreshed sleep-

ers of this beautiful clime. Nature was wearing her freshest, sweetest attire, while music, from the winged songsters of the grove, joined the voices of the sea, as if hymning the praises of the world's great Architect. How striking the contrast, between the smiles of all this vernal beauty, and the anguished hearts, and perturbed passions of those, for whose use and happiness all these lovely scenes were created! Helen had risen early, with the intention of buying off the heartless Craven, from his purchase. She had determined at any price and sacrifice, to retrieve the fatal, unaccountable error of her husband. She rang for Emma, but no answer was made to the oft reiterated summons. Hastily she entered the apartment, which adjoined her own, and with surprise saw that her nice bed had been undisturbed.

At first, she feared that Craven had availed himself of the night, and by stratagem obtained possession of this coveted object, but in looking from the window she saw his hateful form, seated in his handsome carriage, approaching their dwelling. It then occurred to her that Emma might have left in the night, with a trusted servant, and gone to Lefort's, where she was ever most welcome. The thought delighted her, for she hoped by gaining time, and throwing obstacles in the way of Craven, he might be more willing to accede to her wishes. When Craven learned her absence, he assumed some insolent airs, and charged Grafton with conniving at the escape of Emma, that he might have an excuse for not delivering the slave.

"How dare you, sir?" said Grafton, his eye flashing fire, and anger swelling his veins like a whip-lash, "how dare you utter an insult in my presence? Instantly remove your hated person from my plantation, or my slaves shall tie you to yonder oak, and beat you like a hound, till your howls shall remind you of the slave-pens of New Orleans. The slave you purchased is not absent, with my knowledge or by my procurement. I shall not trouble myself

to reclaim her, and most heartily do I hope she is beyond the pursuit of any claimant. Here is your hated gold, the price of all comfort and joy in this household, take it, and name any additional amount which will satisfy you, to give back the contract of sale, and it shall be yours."

"I intended no insult, Mr. Grafton, but I shall leave as required. You will permit me to decline to receive back the money I have paid; it is yours, and Emma is mine. My remedy shall be a peaceful one, and I have no fear as to the result."

While this conversation was going on, Helen had examined the room of Emma, and found there the note which she had written. It revealed, too fatally, the sad event, upon which was to hinge the fate of the family of Grafton.

Helen threw herself instinctively upon her knees by the side of the couch, where she had found that last touching remembrance, which faithful love, and despair, that sees no light or hope, had been so lately busied in creating, and with eyes suffused with burning tears, uplifted, as if invoking relief from thoughts which agonized her whole being, mentally exclaiming, "this must not, cannot be!—

"O, the guilt, the horror!—What expiation can atone for this cruel, this wanton torture?

"What in the eye of Heaven—in the ear of infinite justice, must be the report? and how much has my own conduct had to do with this proceeding? Emma, Emma, is there not a drop of thy blood upon my own garments?

"Saviour, lay not this sin to my charge!"

From the window overlooking the Gulf, Helen saw her husband with a large number of slaves, bearing back the lifeless corse of poor Emma, which the relenting waves of the sea had that morning borne back to the shore.

Her heart for a moment, seemed to stand still. Pale as

marble, uttering no word of sorrow or reproach, her full large eye of blue, unmoistened by a tear, she saw them deposit the last remains of her trusted, devoted Emma upon the couch, where in life it had quietly and peacefully rested.

Leave we here, the living with the dead!

CHAPTER XV

"Fool, that I was, to have suffered that cringing despicable slave-trader to have fairly out-witted me," said Grafton to himself. "Had I driven him as I ought from my door, and forced him to take back his hated gold, the worst that could have happened, would have been a law-suit, and yet, who could have contemplated such a catastrophe. I always associated trouble, in some shape, with Emma. She has been my evil genius. I attributed to her the rejection by Helen, of my first proposals, and secretly did I vow that she should some day deeply regret it. Oh, how has fate forced me to the fulfillment of the promise. I ought never to have married Helen. Pride, more than affection, stirred up within me the resolution that she should be mine, and to what arts did I resort!

"Affecting a feeling and tenderness, which could never have place in my icy nature, and putting on, like a gala-day garment, to be laid aside with the occasion, virtues which would win her pure and gentle heart. And yet I loved her, was proud of her accomplishments, her beauty, her faultless manners, and had she possessed a loftier and bolder spirit, it might have been better for both of us. Too harshly have I dealt with one of her disposition. By sometimes sneering at her ideas of duty and religion, and ridiculing all expressions of high sentiment, I think she thought I had deceived her, and confidence once shaken, scarcely ever is restored. When I have been indulging in those fits of abstraction *so common to me*, I have seen her large blue eyes, overrunning

with tears, fastened with a melancholy gaze upon me, and, instead of obeying the first and best impulses of my heart, have rushed rudely past her, with a look of mingled pity and disgust. And the severity with which, without reason or cause, I treated Emma, when I knew I inflicted a more cruel punishment upon my wife, than upon her slave, is to me now unaccountable.

"Away, with these self-reproaches. Am I a sickly sentimental woman? Why degrade my lion-like nature to that of the whining jackal?"

"I will drive hence the grief which has marred our beautiful home. I will wear a face serene and pure, as that, which the arch deceiver assumed when he whispered to the ear of Eve, and make Helen think this evil can only be repaired by a life of devotion to the slaves upon our plantation."

Frank Grafton was interrupted in these reflections, which he was uttering to himself as he rode over his fields, by the approach of his brother, who had been vainly urging Helen to visit Virginia.

"Well, Charles, what success have you had, in your attempt to heal the nervous disorder which so violently assails poor Helen? I have a great mind to insist upon her leaving Côte Blanche, and in new scenes she would soon forget the occurrences, too light to disturb a mind of any fortitude."

"Think not, Frank, of employing severe or harsh measures with your wife. They have already driven her to the very verge of the grave," said Charles.

"What can I do? This moping melancholy," said Frank, "not only embitters my own life, but must, if indulged in, result in confirmed insanity. Better to brave her reproaches, than witness the wild ravings of madness and despair."

"How strange, with your knowledge of human nature," said Charles, "that you should seem so ignorant of the real character of Helen. You must have won her love by appearing to possess

an amiable and affectionate disposition, and more than all, by inspiring her with the belief that moral principle was the guide of all your conduct. If in this she is deceived, can you be surprised if she feels that she has been greatly wronged? Oh, Frank, it is pride which is poisoning the very fountain of all that is good and generous in your nature, and but for that, you could yet repair the past."

"I will do it; and yet, Charles, to humble myself, even in the estimation of my wife, is a sacrifice that my whole soul revolts at. She must see in a change of conduct what you would express by words. It is the only compromise offered by my haughty spirit."

"What do you propose to do?" said Charles.

"Why, I will banish all sounds and sights of cruelty from the plantation," said Frank. "I will dismiss my overseer. I will persuade Helen to give instruction or advice to the slaves on Sundays, and perhaps in such occupations, and in the hope of being useful to them, she may forget her own grief."

"Better to act thus," said Charles, "even if policy only dictates the course. But of all things, be sure, that if you would hope for a restoration for Helen, kindness and gentleness will be the only medicines which can, in any way, minister to her relief."

"I know not what I would do without you, Charles, for from no one but you could I take advice, particularly when it is mingled with reproof. I will act upon your suggestions, and let me add, that I think we should be cautious in not appearing to direct in any manner, the occupations of Helen, and not to intrude upon her walks or employments, unless she should seem to desire it."

CHAPTER XVI.

SAD beyond description, was the beautiful villa upon the shore of the Gulf, which nature had garnished in richest profusion. No longer were heard in those halls the notes of joy and gladness. The harp, which had so often discoursed sweet music at the bidding of Helen, was now stilled, and the lightest foot-fall awakened an echo throughout the desolate chambers, appalling to the heart.

No place to Helen seemed of interest but the neat little enclosure, where reposed the remains of Ida and the faithful Emma. Day by day was she occupied in decorating those mossy couches with flowers, and weaving the wild rose and honeysuckle midst the creeping moss, that gracefully bound itself around the arms of a lofty oak, at whose feet were new-made graves. And most touching was it to listen to the wild snatches of song, which, bird-like, she poured forth occasionally, as if to hush in sweet slumbers, those who were there reposing.

How delightful the thought, that the spirits of those who are loved and lost, may yet linger around the resting-places, which affection has reared and consecrated, and to which it turns eagerly and often, embalming, with more than Egyptian permanency, all that was lovely and cherished in the dear departed. Oh, how it soothes the sorrow of my heart, to know that the spirits of Ida and Emma always "behold the face of my Father."

Such were the reflections of Helen, as she would return to her home; and her husband and Charles, at times, greatly hoped that the soothing influences of the Bible, which was her constant com-

panion, and the utmost care not to cross her in her conduct, might win her back to happiness and peace.

Either from that waywardness of disposition so peculiar to him, or from compunctious visitings of conscience, from the terrible disaster which his conduct had brought about, the whole demeanor of Frank Grafton towards his slaves, was changed. He discharged his overseer, as he said overseers were always unnecessarily severe, and took upon himself their supervision, managing them all by the most gentle and affectionate government. He encouraged by presents, those who excelled in their labor in the field, and manifested for all of them such an interest, that with the utmost cheerfulness they accomplished their tasks, in little more than half the time which they had occupied, when under the lash of a driver. And on Sundays he would see that all were dressed in their nicest apparel, and assembling them in the beautiful lawn before his house, Helen would read to them some passages of Scripture, and with a word of advice and affection for all, with bright and happy hearts, they would return to their cottages.

"I never believed before, Charles, how much might be done by a quasi parental government with slaves. They now come to me with all their difficulties, and finding me interested to relieve them—knowing that I do not exact their labor by the lash, but that they are rewarded for honest industry, it has created such an emulation among them, that the plantation already wears a new aspect, and never had we such a promise of an abundant crop. I will never employ another overseer, but will take upon myself the oversight of my slaves and property."

"You are right, Frank, in the plan you have adopted, and sure I am, at the end of the year, you will find your plantation improved, your crops increased, the value of your slaves enhanced a thousand fold; for instead of being discontented, surly and disobedient, they would become docile, affectionate and industrious.

And, more than all—aye, a thousand times more, they would, by this very means, become fitted to enjoy the blessings of freedom. Would to God, planters generally would adopt this course.

"How much of heartless cruelty would be saved; and by acts of kindness on the one part, and docility on the other, would be ushered in the morning of that millennial day of freedom, and happiness to millions of slaves.

"From the lips of our great Jefferson I have learned to abhor all slavery, and in his plans for a gradual emancipation, have hoped to see the whole system eradicated and destroyed. But we have no time now for a further discussion, for I see Helen approaching, and I have persuaded her to accompany me in an excursion about the island. How sad, how melancholy, she always appears. If we cannot induce her to leave this spot, rely upon it, the associations connected with it, the indulgence of that rooted sorrow, which yields to no persuasion, will overthrow her intellect, or bring her prematurely to her grave."

At times, while driving along the wild paths, unobstructed by any undergrowth, and which were protected from the rays of the sun, by the deep shade, cast by the large leafy magnolias, Helen would seem to forget her grief, in the versatility of Charles's conversation, and gazing upon the beauties of the scenery ever exhibited on their ride: and at the urgent request of her brother, she promised to devote herself more to domestic avocations, and in a few days, to set off, for a short visit, to the family of Lefort.

CHAPTER XVII.

What a joyous happy household is Lefort's, such an assemblage of all the virtues, graces, and amenities of life.

These are the fruitful sources of a peace, and happiness perennial, flowing on as steadily, as the waters of the bayou, which quietly glide by their dwelling, clear, and calm as the last lingering rays of the gorgeous sun-setting, whose golden hues are now painting, with such transcendent beauty, every leaf and flower of this unrivalled landscape.

"Oh, Helen," said Charles Grafton, "there are no people, who so well understand the philosophy of happiness, as do the French. Contented with what they possess, free from that foolish ambition, to acquire more wealth than their neighbors, literally adopting and acting upon the injunction, 'take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' they pass quietly and happily down the stream of life, unruffled by its cares, undisturbed by its disappointments."

I admire as you do, Charles," replied Helen, "many of the characteristics of the gay and pleasure seeking Frenchman, but while he obeys the injunction, you have quoted, does he equally regard the precept in the same connection, Seek ye first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: As far as I have been enabled to look into the history of the Gallic race, it has seemed to me, that they seek their happiness, in the pleasures and gaieties of life, little regarding that future existence, for which this is but a preparation.

This remark will not apply to the Leforts, for the adversities and trials through which they have passed, have had their designed effect, teaching them abhorence for those atheistical sentiments so prevalent in their native land, and inculcating a sweet and beautiful submission to all the allotments of that Being, who had so signally conducted them by a way, which they knew not. But it is time, Charles, that we retrace our steps, and return to Mr. Lefort's."

Upon their arrival at the foot of the lawn, which embraced in their whole extent, some hundreds of acres, Blanche met them, and with affectionate caresses, welcomed Helen back to the house." "Mother was apprehensive, that you were extending your walk too far, and bade me hasten your return, fearful that you might suffer from the dew at nightfall."

"I live out doors, dear Blanche, and am not afraid of the dews, yet I am much obliged to the kindness of your mother. I fear I have kept your tea in waiting, so we will hurry home, notwithstanding the tempting allurements of these charming grounds."

They found in the hall Mr. and Mrs. Lefort, both of whom were assiduous in their attentions to the fair, yet now pale, and delicate Helen, upon whose sweet face, sorrow had graven, in deep legible lines, a most touching history,

Louise was absent for the moment, upon some domestic employment, preparing perhaps some delicacy, for their visitor. The evening repast being over, all were assembled in a large drawing room and the hours were cheered by the most animated conversation, while Mr. Lefort was examining with Helen, some extensive pictures of French scenery, the work of the finest artists, to which he imparted a strong additional interest, by the clear and interesting explanations he gave of these scenes of trans-Atlantic beauty.

Blanche occasionally warbled some sweet ballad, while Louise with her embroidery on her lap, was carrying on a lively and interesting discussion with Charles Grafton upon the comparative

advantages of city and rural life. And thus the evening wore pleasantly away, when upon Mrs. Lefort's suggesting, that it might be agreeable to Helen to retire to her chamber, Mr. Lefort opening the Bible, as was his custom, morning and evening, read one of those beautiful psalms, descriptive of the angel of Jehovah encamping around those that fear him. Louise and Blanche sang most touchingly the hymn commencing,

"Glory to thee, My God this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O, keep me, King of kings,
Beneath the shadow of thy wings."

The service ended by a beautiful invocation, in which mercies received, were gratefully and filially acknowledged, and the kind care of Him, who never slumbers, was sought; when offering thanksgiving for social intercourse, Mr. Lefort asked an especial blessing for Helen; he prayed that God "would temper the wind to the shorn lamb;" his voice trembled with emotion almost inexpressible. Helen found, in this charming family, a balm and a solace, which had long been a stranger to her breast; and gladly accepted the offer of Blanche as a room-mate, as her husband was detained by sickness on the plantation. Day followed day in quick succession filled up by agreeable occupation. Mr. Lefort rode with Helen about his grounds, and sought, in every way, to divert her from those gloomy subjects, which had almost bereft her of reason, and quite undermined her health, while within doors, some new diversion was frequently planned, to give a new direction to her thoughts and reflections.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Do you not, Miss Lefort," said Charles Grafton, "ever sigh for a return to the vine-clad hills of your native France? I should scarcely think that your pleasure-loving heart would be contented in a change from all the gaieties of the most fashionable life to a home so secluded and quiet as Oak Lawn."

"Then you think me frivolous," replied Blanche, "and that like a painted butterfly, I could live only in the sunbeams, which gild the home of the votary of mere amusement."

"Pardon me, Miss Lefort, nothing was further from my mind. Will you permit me to say that no one could look upon your face, yet beaming with bright, glad thoughts, without thinking that yours was a spirit, which ever revelled in the pleasure imparted by cultivated and refined society, in the admiration of the works of art, in viewing scenes, that valor has immortalized, or that have been clothed with a living, ever-enduring beauty by the magic power of genius? And is it strange that I should have asked you, if you never cast back one lingering, sorrowing look upon all this which you have abandoned?"

"I confess, Mr. Grafton, that for a while, I was afflicted with home-sickness; but I have borrowed relief and contentment from the philosophy of Louise, and I am happy here in our rural and quiet home."

"How do you amuse yourself? And do not the long hours of a summer's day hang wearily upon your hands?" said Charles.

"Father has given me a gallant little steed, that seems to enjoy a gallop with me over the prairies, as if I were his companion.

You would be surprised at the playful intelligence he exhibits. He seems to understand my right of ownership, as though he carried with him a written transfer; for the other day, when the servant mounted him, to take him to the door, he reared and plunged most furiously, until he had thrown his rider. He seemed so wild, mother and Louise begged me not to attempt to ride him. All this time, little Fairy, as I call him, appeared so humble and docile, that I laughed at their fears, and jumped into the saddle, and never did I find him so charming in his gait and so perfectly tractable. And would you believe it, father has so taught me the use of the gun, that from the tallest tree in the forest, I can bring down a squirrel, and am sure of my game, when I shoot at the plover upon the wing. So you see, for outdoor employment, I am well provided."

"But your occupation during the many hours, which a warm sun will not permit you to pass unsheltered by the house. How are they all filled up, Miss Lefort?"

"Men have no curiosity, I see," Blanche archly replied, "but as mere information I will tell you. The hours seem all but too short when I find myself with father, in the library, amusing myself with books, and listening to replies he makes me of scenes and courts described in the volume I may be reading; then music, conversations, calls and visits, all these so occupy and busy me, that I welcome the hour when mother sends me off to sleep and dreams."

"I hope, Miss Blanche, the health of Helen will be so improved by her visit here, that we may again see you at Côte Blanche. With your sister and Mr. Burns, we might make a delightful party, and I should then, in our yacht upon the bay, have an opportunity to test your skill as an angler. I should like to see you when a large red-fish was nibbling at your hook, and witness your anxiety and dexterity as you draw the stout, handsome fish *from his native element.*"

"Oh, it would be charming, I have heard so much," said Blanche, "of these fishing parties, and never yet have had the pleasure of joining them."

"We will get up such a party, Miss Blanche, and you shall taste the red-fish, the sheep's head and the pompano, fresh from our waters, and I think you will say, that for sweetness and delicacy, no fish can rival them. But if you are not an early riser, you cannot be a successful fisherman, for at the earliest dawn of day he sits in his boat and watches his line, for shoals of red-fish are then swimming about, hungry for their morning repast."

"I have learned to enjoy the first breath of the morning," said Blanche. "My rides with father, upon the prairie, have taught me how much they lose, who have never witnessed the freshened beauties, with which night clothes our variegated landscapes. I shall take my usual excursion to-morrow, and if you rise betimes, we shall be glad to have you join us."

"Nothing would afford me more pleasure, and I shall hold myself in readiness for the acceptance of your kind and polite invitation."

At the appointed hour Blanche found Charles with her father in the hall.

Mr. Lefort invited Mr. Grafton to take his horse, as some engagement at home would make it inconvenient for him to join them.

"Blanche," said Lefort, "is so experienced and so thoroughly acquainted with every path that leads through the prairies, that you will excuse me if I remain at home this morning."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Now tell me, Mr. Grafton, what is there in city life more charming than a ride like this?

"Who of all those, who crowd those busy marts of trade, shut up as they are within walls of brick and mortar, ever feel the elasticity and vigor, which are imparted by this healthful exercise and this pure balmy, invigorating air?"

"And I see, Miss Blanche," said Charles, "upon your cheeks a rosy tint, which a city belle would give worlds to possess, and which some, I suspect, vainly attempt to imitate with borrowed coloring. No art can rival the blush, which pure country air will paint upon the cheek, no skill can give that symmetry to the form, built up by that vigorous health, which rural occupations always supplies. But, Miss Lefort, while I am free to admit the beauty of your landscape and the charm of your delightful climate, still for me, I fear more active scenes would be requisite for enjoyment. In other words, I should feel that I had nothing to do."

"Are you not fond of agricultural pursuits? Has a large plantation no charms for you?"

"I ought perhaps to be ashamed to admit it," said Charles, "but my life has been without a purpose."

"I am surprised, Mr. Grafton, at such a remark. The avenues to fame and fortune all open before you, how great are the incitements to exertion!"

"*And yet*, Miss Lefort, without the consciousness that some one

would smile upon those efforts, or rejoice in their success, it is difficult to employ the necessary labor."

"You have ambition, and would not success bring with it, hosts of admirers and friends?" said Blanche. "How great the happiness must he feel, who has just left the popular assembly or the court-room, as he hears his name in every voice, and from every lip pronounced the highest enconiums upon his eloquence."

"Could I awaken in your heart, the smallest desire that such fame should be mine?" said Grafton.

"Surely, Mr. Grafton, I always rejoice in the happiness of my friends, and I hope you permit me to consider you on the list."

"I mean, Miss Lefort, I should say, that"——

"Now don't, Mr. Grafton, waste any of your high powers in making gallant speeches to me, merely to show your ability. I am sure you possess sufficient talent and you only require the will to make yourself eminent in any calling in life."

Charles was a little piqued at the determination of Blanche to give such a turn to his remarks; he would if possible learn from her, whether she entertained for him any other regard than that inspired by a mere acquaintanceship.

"Tell me, Miss Lefort, if by years of devotion to literary or professional pursuits, I should have the good fortune to win a name and a distinction worthy,"——

"Oh," interrupted Blanche, "I will wreathe for your victorious brow, a chaplet, green and fresh, from the leaves of our live oaks and laurel. But we are near home, Mr. Grafton, has not your ride given you an appetite for breakfast? Romance will hardly do as a substitute for that meal, when a two hours' ride has given one a desire for rolls and coffee."

"You are provoking, Miss Lefort. Your ingenuity in giving such turn to the thoughts and expressions of another is unequalled."

"You misjudge me, Mr. Grafton. You know that we poor deli-

cate females shrink from the compliments, which your sex seem to consider it necessary to lavish upon us. I will consider them all spoken in your very best and most gracious manner, and that I am largely your debtor."

What would Charles have given, now that the ice was partially broken, to have revealed to Blanche, the passion, which her fascinating manners, conversation and beauty had inspired.

She treated him with that cordiality and politeness, and yet with such ease and freedom, that it was impossible for him to gain the least insight to that heart, which he would have given worlds to possess.

He feared to make a distinct and bold proposition. He wished if posssible, to create such an interest, that during his absence, no other favored swain might supplant him.

"With what ardor and devotion would I apply myself to those pursuits, those studies, which would mould such a character, as even Blanche would admire. With what eagerness would I cultivate all my powers, studying the best models, communing day and night, with those old masters, who, by their matchless eloquence, held, spell bound, listening senates and popular assemblies: if, by one word, she would whisper to the ear of hope, an assurance, that her smile should be the guerdon of success, toil would be a recreation

"Then indeed would life have an object. And yet why should I aspire to her hand? Why expect any encouragement, of my passion, while I admit to her, that my existence, is without an aim?

"I will at once shake off the lethargy, which has so long been permitted to take possession of my mind, and will trust to the future, the realization of those golden dreams, with which fancy has beguiled so many hours of my being." With such reflections, Charles came from his room to the breakfast table, and, by his manly and eloquent conversation, fascinated still more the warm and sensitive heart of Blanche.

All were captivated by the beautiful descriptions he gave them of his native Virginia, the hills that lifted their blue ridges up to the storm-king's home, the valleys at their feet smiling in perpetual verdure, the streams gracefully meandering, now through meadows radiant in their rich luxuriance, and anon leaping wildly along their rocky beds, as if enjoying some sportive gambol with the naiads of the river.

And then he amused them by anecdotes of those distinguished men, who had there enkindled into a blaze the revolutionary feeling, aroused by arbitrary exaction, on the part of the Mother Country, and of the matchless wisdom and prudence of those who helped to form the Constitution of the Country, and make it acceptable to the people. Here he appeared perfectly at home. He had made himself familiar with the history of his country—with the origin of the struggle with England, and personally acquainted with the men who took part in it, he could make himself unusually agreeable upon topics that, of all others, were most interesting to Mr. Lefort.

How was his bosom agitated, as he would sometimes catch the eye of Blanche, when it kindled with pleasure, from these conversations.

Has not the heart a language, all its own? Are there no voices of the spirit, which, to the ear, are unheard? If not, why then did the heart of Charles beat with new and strong aspirations, as he gazed into those deep blue orbs, which smiled so winningly, and why did Blanche feel a pride and a joy in the revelation of so much talent in her young and handsome admirer?

Helen had now passed a week at the hospitable mansion of Lefort. So agreeably had every hour been filled up—so varied her employment, that she could scarcely have told how she had been occupied. Her drives over the extended and beautiful prairies, her walks along the banks of the bayou, with Blanche, at

evening, when a declining sun was lending a softened, mellowing glow to the beautiful wild-flowers, that mantled the earth and crept up the trees which shaded their path; the charming tête-à-tête with Mr. Lefort and Louise, all combined, had winged the hours of each passing day, furnishing "a sweet oblivious antidote" for that sad melancholy, which had been so busy at her heart. She had retired to her chamber, and opening her trunk, her eye fell upon the letter of poor Emma, marred by scalding tears, which intensest agony had wrung out from those large, lustrous eyes, that had just been gazing for the last time, upon the loved face of of her almost idolized mistress. As she read it, and kissed the golden ringlet of little Ida, her own bosom heaved with inexpressible emotions, and she burst into a flood of tears. "Is it possible that I have, amidst the enticing, fascinating scenes of Oak Lawn—the almost enchanting society of this hospitable family—can it be that I have forgotten my first-born, my beautiful Ida, and her whose life has been consecrated to my happiness, and whose last hours were embittered from the fear that sorrow might darken my pathway? O Emma, hadst thou died in thy bed, could I have been with thee in that dark hour, have read to thee but one verse of that sweet word, and pointed thee to Him who hath said, "When the waters overflow thee, I will be with thee," I could have calmly closed thine eyes, and deposited thy coffined form by the side of my sweet Ida, and hushed all repinings in the sweet consciousness that "He doeth all things well." But, O, the guilt, the sin! sure I am that Mrs. Lefort must regard it as I do—as must all just, disinterested, intelligent minds, and more than all, as does the all-seeing, impartial eye of Infinite Justice. Dare I hope to escape from the penalty which my share in this terrible tragedy must necessarily bring upon me? True, no human tribunal calls us to account—no punishment from man, under his limited and partial administration, demands an expiation for the

life of this murdered one, but, O, I hear upon every returning wave that washes the shore at Côte Blanche, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

"It seems to me sinful, to indulge in the pleasures and amusements of those whose pure, peaceful lives are a constant, speaking rebuke upon blood-guiltiness.

"I will, I must immediately return to Côte Blanche, and in some way there make atonement for a wrong, which rivers of tears would be unavailing to efface."

Helen excused herself from returning to the parlor this evening, saying she would try and sleep off a severe headache. The quick eye of Blanche detected that Helen had been suffering deeply, and though her native delicacy would not permit her to intrude upon the private griefs of a guest, who had won for herself the love and sympathy of all at Oak Lawn, she employed every expedient within her power to chase away the gloom, which she saw was darkening the mind of Helen.

Bidding her a sweet good night, she hoped, that sleep would, as it always did to her own guiltless heart, bring repose and peace, and soothe the almost distracted bosom of the fair sufferer. When Mr. Grafton came from the parlor, Helen said she would join him, on the morrow, in his return to Côte Blanche, and though he feared somewhat the effect of the associations of that spot, the terrible remembrances, which those scenes must awaken in her memory, he dared not resist the strongly expressed wishes of his wife, and consenting to the proposal, Helen packed up her trunks in preparation for her departure.

In the morning the family of Lefort were surprised upon seeing Helen attired in her travelling dress, and with all the earnestness which propriety would permit, urged her to review her determination, and remain a few days longer. Helen gratefully acknowledged the kind civilities of the family, but said she must return,

and hoped that they might be permitted soon to welcome each one of that happy household at Côte Blanche.

"And you, dear Louise, so experienced, so skilled in horsemanship, and so early a riser too, would find no difficulty in coming any day and joining us at dinner, and sure I am, glancing at the handsome figure of Burns, who stood at her side, you will not have too look far, for a gallant Squire to accompany you on your excursion."

"Mr. Burns," archly replied Louise, "is so in love with his law-books, and so enamored of the society of the fair Dulcineas in the quiet little village of Attakapas, that it would be a large draft upon his gallantry for so long an expedition."

"A draft, Miss Louise, which I shall very surely not dishonor, even at the risk of losing the good esteem of those village maidens, whom you seem to think so captivating, and you will not regard it as flattering, when comparing the pleasure to be derived from communion with Blackstone or Justinian with yourself, I should take the liberty of preferring the latter. So I here promise Mrs. Grafton, that I shall early use such poor powers of persuasion as I may possess to induce Miss Louise to accept your invitation, with the best offices of the Squire, you have pointed out as her escort."

Accepting the affectionate adieus of the hospitable family, with whom she had so agreeably passed the last two weeks, she set out with her husband and Charles Grafton, for their home upon the sea.

"What a charming, fascinating being is Mrs. Grafton," said Mrs. Lefort, as the receding form of Helen was being lost in the distance on her way to her sad home. "Her manners are so natural, so unaffected, her intelligence so rare, and the purity of her soul so almost angelic, I could not bear to part with her."

"Do not, mother, call her Mrs. Grafton," said Louise. "There

is something so sinister in the very expression of the face of her husband, so much of heartlessness exhibited occasionally in his conversation, and that cruel conduct of his, which has, I feared, destroyed for ever the peace of mind of his lovely wife, that I cannot bear to think of him, in association with so much sweetness, purity and truth. I shall always call her Helen, and should gladly blot out from my vocabulary, the very name of Grafton."

"You are quite too severe, my daughter; at least your language might bear an extent to which I should be unwilling," said Mr. Lefort, "to follow you, and upon reflection, I think you yourself, would desire to limit it. The conduct of Frank Grafton in connection with the death of the unfortunate Emma surely can admit of no justification. Not that I think, he intended or dreamed of such a fatal result, but there was such a trifling upon so serious a matter, so foolish and so ill considered conduct, which under any circumstances, was calculated so seriously to affect the happiness of two innocent beings, that I can attribute it to nothing but the coldest unconcern, where all should have been affection and confiding trust. Bitterly, most bitterly, has he repented the result of his rash act, and well I know, he would give all he possesses, could he restore to life the ever faithful attendant upon his wife and child. But I was about to say, that the name of Grafton has not been dishonored in the character of his brother Charles, for rarely have I met with a person of a more elevated and chivalrous bearing, of more noble and exalted sentiments. Self-sacrificing and yet proud to a degree, noble and generous in his nature, with a heart, warm and affectionate as a woman's, and yet courageous as a lion, when danger is imminent and near, intelligent and manly, he has impressed me greatly in his favor."

At this warm and eulogistic defence of Charles Grafton, the face of Blanche mantled with blushes, and she hastily retreated from the room to cover all observation of a feeling, which she

would not for the world have disclosed, and which she felt herself powerless to conceal.

"I confess, dear father, that I was too impulsive in the expression of my opinion, so far as Charles is concerned, his devotion to his sister has won from me a very high regard, but I am really afraid of Frank, and nothing now, in my opinion, restrains him but absolute fear that his cruelty will drive to desperation the only being who has any influence over him. Never did I feel a deeper sympathy for any one than I do for Helen."

"How powerless are human laws for the punishment of offences," said William Burns. "I have had some little experience in criminal proceedings, and while I have seen the poor, and miserable, and degraded of our race punished for crimes which temptations, lion-like in their power, have made almost irresistible, in almost all cases the wealthy, those whom the world calls great, escape detection. And were I to search the whole record of crime, the blackest page which the wickedness of the world has unfolded, would disclose no offence so malignant in its design, so deserving of retribution, as the murder of Emma. And who was the murderer? Who will be arraigned at the Court of Heaven, when He, "who makes inquisition of blood," shall render the final and just decision upon this act of more than fiendish cruelty? Was the poor slave girl Emma to blame? She had been reared with the greatest care and tenderness, the unfolding of her character had been under the influences and teachings of a pure and beautiful morality; the earliest and warmest gushings of her heart were drawn out of those well-springs of affection and love, which are ever found pure and deep in these children of dependence. And what terrible alternative was before her? The slave-pens of New Orleans! The heartless, cruel trader, gloating over the terror and anguish of his victim, even before his terrible fangs could fasten upon her flesh! And the Mississippi homo! *with its horrors* that language is powerless to depict, the misery

of a final separation from the only being she had ever learned to love. What heart could endure all this when in a moment she could find a sure and safe release in the bosom of the deep? Where, tell me where, on what page of romance or of song, is cruelty or suffering more graphically depicted? and yet he who is the cause of it, goes unwhipped of justice, and the world will palliate his conduct, and other Graftons and other Emmas will hereafter furnish occasion for the commission of crime, and the endurance of bitterest wretchedness."

CHAPTER XX.

No incident of interest marked the returning journey of Mr. and Mrs. Grafton, and Charles. The conversation took its shape and bearing from their recent delightful visit.

Both of the Graftons were animated with hope and happiness, seeing a smile occasionally return to the lips of Helen, and that her thoughts clustered so closely around the delightful circle at Oak Lawn, each member of which she remembered with so much fondness and affection.

"I hardly know," said she, "which of those charming girls, I most admire. The stately beauty of Louise, her dignified lofty carriage, and her highly polished and singularly correct conversation impress you with great admiration, and the goodness of heart, which underlies all these apparent excellences of character necessarily wins your highest regard and esteem; but there is such a sweet *naïveté* in Blanche, the outgushings of a heart, so full of affection, tenderness, and sincerity, such an originality and elegance in her conversation, the grace in her manners, which art can never give, and a face, so bright, so illuminated, that Hebe herself might envy; I confess that my prepossessions are rather in favor of the youngest of those sisters. Do you not agree with me Charles? The rosy blush, which I sometimes saw tinging her fair cheek, as you seemed to be uttering some rather warm, yet half concealed sentiment, told to the eye of an observing woman, the purpose and character of your remark. Now tell the truth *Charles, were you* not indulging in the expression of some tender

sentiment, while Miss Blanche was looking over that 'book of beauty' with such an air of perfect unconcern?"

"How suspicious you ladies are of the designs and purposes of all gentlemen, when you see them engaged in a nice tête-à-tête with a fair and fascinating young lady. I admit that it would be no very difficult matter to fall in love with one, so well deserving the high encomiums, you have bestowed upon Miss Blanche Lefort, but I trust I have seen a little too much of the world to believe that she could be won by any one but by him, in whom were combined those gifts of mind, heart, and person, which I have not the vanity to suppose are mine. How sweetly she sings. Those high and exquisitely plaintive notes are carolled with all the richness and clearness of the song of the lark, so artless is her manner, so unaffected and simple, that while she entrances you with her sweetly warbled song, you can hardly tell, which was the most enchanting, the wonderful execution, or the witchery of the fascinating songstress. I confess that without having dared to fall in love, she has impressed me with more admiration than almost any being I ever saw."

"Well, Charles, I think there is as much of the romantic in your conversation, as would surfeit a young girl just bidding adieu to her teens," interrupted Frank Grafton. "The young ladies are clever enough, but their advantages have been very great, and every care has been bestowed upon their education. How Louise can be so struck with that pedantic young limb of the law, all of whose conversation so smacks of the shop, upon whose lips the words morality and principle linger with such a lickerish liking; seems strange; and yet I doubt not, he would for ten dollars defend a felon, that stole your cow, and try, by some false logic, to convince a jury of his innocence, though again and again he had confessed the crime of which he was charged.

"Since his successful defence of Paul Eaton of the offence of interfering or tampering with slaves, of which I dare say he is

guilty enough, though not precisely as accused, he plumes himself most jauntily, and I presume, from his self-satisfied air, that the highest rewards of the profession would, in his inflated opinion, be no sufficient recompense, for a common enough defence of a poor strolling preacher. I wish I could see him within the gripe of Squire Crafty, he would so well take off this mock morality, and teach the young poppinjay, a modesty, which would be most useful to him."

Helen made no remark in reply to the bitter expressions, which fell so scornfully from the lips of her husband. She knew the occasion of the ill feeling, for her quick eye had marked the cold, yet guarded manner of William Burns, when in the presence of her husband. She perceived, as if by intuition, that he knew all the horrors of the tragedy so recently enacted at Côte Blanche, and that he regarded her husband in a light, to her sensitive heart, most dreadful. She was as pale as marble. Her large blue eyes were tearless, yet they glowed with that unnatural brilliancy, indicating that the struggle with her emotions was almost too intense for the mind of the delicate and lovely one, whose anguish, though generally concealed, was burning as with a living flame at her very heart strings.

Too late Mr. Grafton saw the effect, he had unwittingly wrought upon the keenly excited mind of Helen, now alive to any remark, which, however distantly, alluded to the source of her sorrows. Vainly did he attempt to interest her, by descriptions of the scenery of Oak Lawn, or to arrest her attention by relating the playful witticisms of Blanche, but it was manifest, from the workings of her half averted face, from her downcast eye, and the deep, absorbing melancholy, which like a pall overspread her chiselled features, that her heart took no part in the conversation of her husband. Grief was busy at that heart, reading the touching story of wrong and suffering, indelibly inscribed upon it and turning to ashes all the flowers, that once had bloomed and blos-

somed there. They pursued their journey with scarcely an attempt to vary its monotony, by further remark. Both Frank and Charles Grafton saw the futility of any further attempt to chase away the gloom of Helen, and most fearful were their forebodings of the effect, which, the presence of those objects, that must recall to her mind all the past, would produce upon her shattered, excited sensibility.

"I cannot see Côte Blanche; already I hear the solemn dirges of the sea. No voice of affectionate welcome will greet me at the door of my dwelling. No kind, devoted attentions, anticipating every want, and wish, will relieve the fatigues of my journey. All, all, is desolation now at that home. My heart sickens, my spirit dies within me, as I contemplate my approach to that grave of buried love, and that mound where now sleeps the free form of her, whose affection never wavered; whose last breathed sigh was for the happiness of those, who had destroyed her own."

Such were the reflections, half-whispered expressions of Helen, as she gazed, with a somewhat vacant look, upon the objects that met her view.

How vain to attempt a description of the feelings of her husband. Remorse was gnawing at his heart. His thoroughly awakened conscience, with its poisoned stings, was ever bringing before the eyes of his mind, the very face and figure of poor Emma, as upon bended knees, and eyes bedewed with tears, she besought him to save her from the polluting touch of the soulless Craven, the infamy and degradation of the Mississippi home, so that his very eyeballs seemed seared with the sight, and he would start from the fantasies of his mind, as if they had been living, acting realities. The imagination of the reader will better supply a description of the last few hours of these careworn travellers, than could be given by written words. For what language can describe that expressive silence, which anguished hearts alone can feel and appreciate. Tears would melt the ice, that almost

freezes up the very fountain of life, but they will not flow. No kindly ray beams in upon the chambers of that mind, shrouded in the darkness of deep despair.

"Can it, oh! can it be true," was the thought unexpressed of Charles, as he looked upon the visage, pale and wan, of his dearly loved sister, "that there are no sorrows which heaven cannot heal?"

CHAPTER XXI.

SHADOWS, deep and dark, rest upon that lovely spot, where, but a few months past, all was light and joy! The same bright sun, it is true, gilded with hues of gold, the stately stocks of the sugar-cane, as they waved their green blades in the breeze; the laugh of the joyous laborer, as he returned from the fields, was as ringing, and full of merriment as ever; and the fisherman's dwelling was cheered by the same bright and happy smile, as the mother, with the babe on her knee, looked out upon the placid sea, and saw her child's father returning with the fruit of that day's toil!

But no sounds of happiness were heard in the home of Grafton, for peace and joy had been driven hence, by wrongs for which there could be no reparation.

Death might enter the habitation, and cut off, in the very bloom of infancy, the hopes of happiest years; the wild, ungovernable tornado might, in a moment, raze from the earth, the fairest and firmest creations of human skill and art; or bury, beneath the waves of the sea, home, with all its comforts and embellishments: yet faith could still lift its eye of hope, brightened with a smile, conscious that His arm, who doeth all things well, had wrought this desolation and ruin. But for guilt, which blots out, with ruthless hand, that life which it can never restore, there can be no amends, and sorrow, yet, unavailing sorrow, is the sure and necessary result.

The arrival of Helen at Côte Blanche was attended by no very marked expression of feeling; but, as she walked over the house,

outside of which, for days, she had not passed, there was manifest that sense of utter loneliness, which told you, at once, of the grief which was consuming her.

Her disposition was even more sweet and gentle; yet the corroding effect of some dark thoughts, was palpable to the most careless observer. Day by day, that lovely form was becoming more and more attenuated, and to the eye of affectionate interest, it was apparent, unless some complete, radical change could be effected, she would soon join those, whom she was so deeply deploring.

"I pray you, dear Helen," said Charles, "try and dispel the gloom, which is ever your constant companion. Yield not to its influence, and, for the sake of those who love you, with an affection that knows no bounds, drive away that melancholy, which, like the bird of night, ever mournfully hovers around your existence."

"Oh, Charles, vainly have I made the effort. Again and again have I counterfeited a gaiety, which had no place in my heart; for I know the sadness my presence imparts to all within the sphere of my influence; but the associations of this place, the terrible events of which it has been the scene, are full of woe. No sound, or sight, meets my eye, or ear, but tells me of the awful past."

"Helen, I know full well, and appreciate the dark trials which have fallen upon you," said Charles; "but the beautiful religion, which you have so often inculcated, and so illustrated in your pure and guileless life, would, it seems to me, teach you that some good was to be evolved from them.

"You need not remain here; my brother says he would gladly, at any sacrifice, dispose of his possessions, and return to Virginia, if he could thereby bring back the bloom to your cheek, and the throb of happiness to your heart, which were yours, when, a few years since, you became the wife of his bosom."

"No, no, Charles, I prefer remaining here. Change of place I am sure, would work no change of feeling. With all its bitter recollections, there is a spell that binds me to this spot, which I would not break if I could, and I am certain I could not, if I would. Urge me not, dear brother, as you value my happiness, to alter my resolution. I will not conceal from you, that in my future, there are no green spots; that the bright blossoms, which hope planted in my young heart, are all withered and dead. A few months passed, and I shall sleep beneath yonder oak, and may I not hope, that my memory will be green in your heart, like its leaves, whose bright, fresh hue never fades."

Unwearied and unceasing now were the efforts of the husband and the brother to interest Helen, and divert her mind from the one great thought, which was all-absorbing; but diseases of the mind and heart baffle the remedies which affection, and love so assiduously employ.

Day by day they saw that once commanding form, now become so slender, that it seemed but the shadow of its former self, and the mind, like the casket which contained it, was fast becoming a ruin. At times she would refuse all sustenance, and for hours would sit in her lone chamber noticing no one, and if spoken to, would betray an impatience and temper most unusual in her, and muttering some unwillingness to be constantly watched, would shut the door in a manner, the most angry and decided. At other times, she was as gentle as a lamb and yet the slightest attempt to change her resolution, or if she fancied she was observed, she would weep as if her heart would break, and in piteous strains exclaim, "I am not mad." As far as possible she was indulged in every caprice even. She would sometimes be out for hours and returning with baskets of wild flowers, she would array most tastefully the cradle of Ida, varying her occupation with some sweet plaintive, lullaby, as if her babe was nestling

beneath the folds of the couch which she was watching with such apparent interest.

Wildly dash the waves upon the beach of Côte Blanche, and beneath the wide-spread branches of a lofty oak sits Helen, her raven locks floating in the breeze, and her face beaming with intelligence and interest, as if listening to whispers from the spirit-land, borne upon the crested wave. Her delicate taper fingers stretched winningly toward the whitening foam, as if she would wrest from the grasp of the all-conquering sea, some dearly-loved object, about to be engulfed in its dark abyss.

"Emma, Emma, you shall not be sold to the heartless traders of New Orleans!

"Come! come! Bring back with you, my sweet little cherub, the cold winds will chill, the dark waters drown my child, and I shall then go mad with wretchedness! Here you shall rest on this mossy couch! I have garnished it with the harebell and rose, and the birds will warble their sweetest notes o'er your slumbers. Ah! she comes not,—no! no! no!—they laid her all cold and wet, bound with sea-weed, in the dark ground to hide her from Craven!

"There must I go and guard her from harm. Oh, how sweetly can I sleep on that bed of moss, for I feel so tired, and faint—and the lights are all going out—Ida—Emma—Heaven!"

On a clear, bright, and balmy evening, just as the last rays of the setting sun was tinging with gorgeous golden hues, the waters of the Gulf, the wearied and worn spirit of poor Helen found rest and peace in the repose of death. So calmly and peacefully had she died, that her husband and brother, as they came out to accompany her home thought her but reclining upon the grave of Ida. Her horror-struck husband shuddered at the sight of this wreck of loveliness, and in almost a state of stupefaction saw his brother lift her, like an infant, and bear her to their desolate and gloomy dwelling. Grief which destroys all hope, poisoned

the fountain of life, and her pure spirit passed from the sorrows of earth to the joys of heaven. The harp with its thousand strings, lately so rich in its sweet voices of melody, had lost its power. No hand could again awaken, and bring back those tones, now hushed and still for ever.

The unerring arrow had reached the heart, no skill, no tenderness, no love could provide a remedy. Side by side with her darling Ida, and the faithful Emma, Helen reposes.

The sweet music of the sea, sweetly chiming with the melodies of the grove, shall utter the requiem for this broken heart!

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW days subsequent to this sad event, which we have related in the foregoing chapter, Mr. Lefort received from Charles Grafton, the following letter.

CÔTE BLANCHE, *April* 18—.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The blow which we have so long dreaded, has at last fallen, with stunning force upon our home. Our dear Helen is no more. For the last few days she has seemed more an inhabitant of some bright sphere, than of earth, for though her mind for sometime past seemed to have lost its balance, yet she ever appeared as if holding near and delightful communion with that happy throng, who, released from the trials and sorrows of earth, have entered upon the joys and bliss of heaven.

Most touchingly would she repeat, in scripture language, the magnificent description of heaven, its pearly gates, its golden streets, its unfading light, and then in a voice full of the most affecting melody would she sing, the hymn,

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green;"

her beautiful countenance almost seraphic in its expression, her slight and wasted figure, so almost unearthly, that it scarcely required the aid of imagination to regard her, as already a denizen of Paradise. Without any apparent disease, an angel hand seemed gradually preparing her, for her departure, and frequently so still and hushed were her breathings in slumber, that we feared she had entered upon that sleep, that knows no waking.

"All medical aid was useless; affectionately, but with great firmness, she resisted our entreaties to leave Côte Blanche, and for the last few days *of her life, we could* not persuade her to take any sustenance.

"Raising her large blue eyes, beaming with expression, she would say, 'I have meat to eat, that ye know not of; my Heavenly Father feedeth me.' And so she died! We saw no chariot of fire, and horsemen thereof; to our vision it was not permitted to see the heavens opened, but we know that she is now at peace, emparadised. At the close of day, the hour she loved so well, a gentle breeze from the sea softly stirring the leaves of our noble oaks, the departing sun casting a melancholy ray upon the verdant, lovely landscape, we laid her down upon that spot, which her own hands had planted with the rose and cypress, and which her own tears had watered. And now, I need hardly say to you, Côte Blanche, once so radiant and smiling, bears an aspect of complete desolation.

"Courageous as I fancied myself to be, I can no longer remain amidst scenes so fraught with saddest memories, and shall to-morrow leave for Virginia.

"I had intended to have visited Oak Lawn before my departure, and to ask in person, your acceptance of our warmest thanks, for the kind attentions and generous sympathies, we have received at the hands of yourself and your family. But I feel that I have no right to burden others with griefs, which have been cast upon me. With my kindest regards to Mrs. Lefort and your daughters, permit me to subscribe myself.

"Very truly and sincerely yours,

"CHARLES GRAFTON."

"In all my recollections, I can think of no more tragic story than the brief history of Helen Marshall," said Mr. Lefort, "and yet how seemingly unnecessary and strange the cause. Some foolish caprice, or whim of her husband's, leading to most terrible results. I cannot believe, that any man could ever contemplate an act of such barbarity."

"I dislike to indulge in harsh expressions," said Louise, "but I think Frank Grafton capable of anything. In a conversation with Mr. Burns, I heard him utter such horrible sentiments, laugh at all idea of accountability, and sneer at virtue with such malignity, I made up my mind that he would hesitate at nothing, if it would minister to his gratification. I grant him talent, great information, and wonderful powers of conversation, but he seems to me a

perfect Mephistophiles, and now that all restraint is removed I believe he will give full way to his demoniac passions."

"I hope not," said Mr. Lefort, "but that the influences of such awful trials will have their designed effect upon his heart and conscience. What a difference, between him and his brother."

"And yet," said Louise, "how little do we know of Charles Grafton. He may be all that he seems, or that we could desire, but a brother of such a man, the same mother—I confess the name is to me, a name of omen."

"You do not," said Lefort, "remember how much education and association may have had to do, in the formation of the character of Frank Grafton? I am told that neither of them were blessed with a father's counsels, or a mother's priceless care, and watchful love, but that left while quite young, in the charge of distant relatives, the education of their minds or hearts has been very much the result of good or ill fortune.

During all this conversation, the heart of poor Blanche was tossed by excitement almost inexpressible. She had felt most deeply the death of Helen, for she had been greatly attached to her, and Charles Grafton had inspired her with a sentiment, she hardly dared to trust her heart to analyze. Often in their walks, when he would evidently intend an expression of his attachment, she would, with a spice of coquetry, turn him from his purpose, or by a mode of conversation, which would induce an ingenuous mind to suppose that she wished to save him the mortification of a refusal; with a look of disappointment, he would speak of a sad future for himself, uncared for, and unloved. She knew the power she possessed over him, and though she greatly admired him and was deeply interested in him, was pleased to make full trial of his love. But now that he was to leave Louisiana, as she feared forever, that she was not again to enjoy the delight of his society, to hear from his lips those expressions of interest and regard so complimentary, and so gratifying, a complete revulsion of feeling took

place, and she concealed in the deepest recesses of her heart, a sadness, and a sorrow, never before experienced. She could scarcely restrain the defence, that would spring to her lips, of him, whom she secretly loved, when correctly, but dangerously, attacked by Louise.

"He must," rejoined Blanche, "be the veriest hypocrite, and for no purpose, and at a time too, when his own heart is rent by sorrow; or the sentiments expressed in the letter, father has just read, disclose a high sentiment, and a tender affection possessed but by the very fewest of all my acquaintances. I scarcely think it generous or just, in his absence, to charge him, at least by insinuation, of a connection or participation in a crime, which you have justly stigmatized as the darkest in all the black catalogue of sin."

"Why, Blanche," said Louise, "I never dreamed of arousing your sensibilities in the casual remark I made, or that you felt for Mr. Grafton, more or other interest, than that of an acquaintance of a few weeks' standing."

"And such an acquaintanceship might well enough have elicited a single word, even of defence," said Blanche. "But I have no justification to make, and no sensibilities to check or conceal, so you may well spare yourself the trouble of attempting to produce an effect, if the object is a discovery."

"Blanche, you know I have no such purpose," said Louise.

"Well then all is forgotten," said Blanche; "but once for all, even at the risk of having my motives or feelings misinterpreted, I must say of Charles Grafton, that the high powers of his mind, are not more attractive, or marked, than the goodness of his heart."

"So far as I have been able to form an opinion," replied Louise, "I agree with you, and admit that I may have harshly judged one, whom I may never see again, and permitted the influence of a name to do him unintentional injustice."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The dark mysterious mind of Frank Grafton now turned, like the wounded serpent, to sting itself. The sharp, iron tooth of remorse had entered his soul, and its gnawings no human device could stay or hinder. Night was rendered hideous by distempered dreams, which sleep, no longer sweet to him, brought to his couch, and he would awake, his hair almost stiffened with fear, and his strong frame trembling with agony, as if an army of demons were about to bear him to the regions of the lost. Most welcome was the returning light of morning, as it would dispel the phantoms, that disturbed his repose.

Greatly attached as he was to his brother, the only human being for whom he entertained the least feeling of regard, he frequently shunned his presence, fearful that he might witness the workings of his tortured heart. Charles urged upon him a sale of their plantation, and to return with the slaves to Virginia. "This place," said he, "were it more lovely than fancy could paint, and a perfect mine of wealth to its possessor, for me would have no attractions. We have enough for our wants, let us leave this spot so crowded with bitter memories, and upon the banks of the Potomac, or in some sweet valley, sheltered by the Blue Ridge, we may yet find that happiness denied to us in Louisiana."

"That would never do, Charles. To give up a property like ours, would be the height of folly. This plantation is almost priceless in value. The influence of the warm sea breezes, as they *float over the* Gulf Stream; protect our cane from frost, and the

great fertility of the soil always assures us of a most abundant crop. I came here with the intention of amassing a large fortune, and those just expectations must not be disappointed."

"I know," said Charles, "that it is vain to argue with you, when your mind is made up, but for myself, I have determined upon an immediate departure, and yet it is with great pain that I leave you, now that affliction has laid its hand so heavily upon you."

"Do not stay, Charles; I shall find relief from harrowing reflections, in unwearied occupation, and I am more fitted by nature than you are for breasting the stormy trials of life."

It was decided that Charles should at once set off for New Orleans, on his way to the North, and supplied with letters of credit, upon their commission merchant in that city, Frank hastened his preparation for the journey. It is a peculiarity of strong minds, especially when deeply imbued with pride, to seek in seclusion, alleviation from distress.

Grief is regarded as a weakness, and a sigh, or a tear, as proof of effeminacy. As the stricken deer parts from the herd, and seeks some lone desolate spot to die, so a haughty spirit would find a place, so secluded, that no eye could witness, and no ear listen to the wailings, which an agonized heart is forced to utter. In the presence of others, a continual strife was going on in the bosom of Frank, to conceal the emotions which were agitating it. He would feign a hilarity that illy became him, while the most bitter, malignant sneers at a tale of woe, would reveal the leading trait of his character. He would be alone with his slaves. That dark spirit, shut up, with its own communings, permitted no approach.

The plantation and slaves were one vast machine, and its master mind was Frank Grafton. It was rather a pleasure, than otherwise, that the day had arrived, when Charles should leave Côte Blanche.

"Before we part, Charles, it is necessary, that, in a few words, I should acquaint you with the condition of our possessions, and what my determinations are as to their destination, in case of accident to myself. All the incumbrances upon the property are paid off. With my commission merchant in the city, is a trunk, containing all the title deeds and evidences of the same, and my will, making such a disposition of my interest, as I desire; my books and papers will show the amount of money in the hands of my merchant. I have thought it more convenient to keep all these accounts in my own name, and equally advantageous to yourself. I will continue to manage the estate, as if it were my own, upon joint account. And when you may wish any division, you have only to signify it, and it shall be done to your satisfaction. The title to the plantation and to the slaves, not being in my own name, I can make no disposition of the same, but upon your signature. And now, Charles, I bid you farewell, and wish you more happiness than has ever fallen to my lot."

Charles was too deeply affected for utterance. The calm, calculating manner in which Frank had spoken of the property, and of its disposition, seemed really ominous, and scenes of the past came rushing up so thickly before his vision, that he felt as if summoned again to the house of mourning. Oppressed with a weight, which hung heavy at his heart, he bade adieu to Côte Blanche.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Months had now passed, but in their passage had brought neither peace nor change, for the conscience-stricken Grafton. His mind, ever brooding over the past, preyed upon his robust constitution, and so wrought upon his nervous system, that the strong man, at times, exhibited the weaknesses of childhood. Dwelling alone, and indulging the suspicions, which would crowd in upon him, that he was regarded as cruel and unprincipled, he became a complete misanthrope.

At times, he would seek in the Bible, for that alleviation which it always affords to the humble and the penitent; but as his proud spirit could discover, in its beautiful philosophy, no refuge, but in self-abasement; no pardon and peace, but in confession and contrition; he would throw it aside, as fitted only for allaying the fears of silly women and children. And yet his powerful mind, which had examined the evidences, and witnessed the fruits of the religion it taught, would not permit him to rest in the hope, that it was all a fable. "Well, if it is true," he would say to himself, "why should I disquiet myself about that, over which I have no control? Shall the clay say unto the potter, why has thou formed me thus?" And so he would attempt to cheat himself into the belief that he was not a free agent. He hoped that a trip to New Orleans, which had become necessary, in some business transactions, might give a new current to his thoughts, and enable him to forget the dark deeds, which so haunted his waking and sleeping hours. In that gay, pleasure-

loving city, he mingled in all the scenes of amusement and dissipation.

He sought, in the excitement of cards, at the faro table, and at the race-course, that happiness which others seemed to find there, but in vain. Staking large sums upon the throw of a single card, or upon the success of some favorite race-horse, he was always successful; but the triumph brought rather disgust than pleasure, unless, as he sometimes did, he could see that the loss was torture to his adversary. He would then taunt him with his want of skill and judgment, and throwing the money upon the table, would leave those haunts of iniquity and ruin, as if disgusted with himself. Through such associations, accepting an invitation to a large party, given him by Mrs. McLane, he was, by his graceful and elegant manners, the originality and power of his conversation, courted and caressed, and the delicate compliments, which he so well knew how to employ, awakened the admiration of many a fair *demoiselle*, in that brilliant assembly. Though he never mingled in the mazy dance, he would whisper such agreeable flattery in the ear of the mother of some acknowledged belle, or attach to himself, by his winning address, in spite of pre-engagement, some fascinating young lady, that he was the cause of unhappiness and heart-burning to many a guest in that festive scene. The band of music striking up an inspiriting march, was the signal for supper.

Offering his arm to the hostess, he attended her to a large and splendid apartment, brilliantly illuminated, and decorated in the most tasteful manner. The scene itself was enchanting; the rooms were hung with beautiful tapestry, and the table, groaning beneath the rare, delicate viands and delicious wines, with which it was loaded, was garnished with bouquets of the rarest and loveliest flowers, blooming in that genial clime.

The gentle fatigue of the dance, heightened the zest for ices, and the sparkling champagne, while the nicely-prepared wood-

cock and plover tempted the appetite of the most fastidious epicure.

Supper being over, as they returned to the parlors, some joined in the pleasures of the dance, while those who were disinclined to this amusement, formed card parties in separate apartments. Grafton accepted an invitation to make up a party at whist, a game in which he specially prided himself. His adversaries were adepts at cards and proposed to keep up the interest, by a wager of fifty dollars, upon each rubber. It was accepted, and by inattention, or want of skill on the part of Lapere, partner of Grafton, the game was lost. A new rubber was proposed, Grafton warning Lapere to be wary, as they had to contend against the utmost skill and prudence. Carelessness was again manifested by Lapere; a lead throwing the game into the hands of their adversary, so nettled Grafton, that with a sneer, he remarked "that the advantage of playing with a dummy, was, that he could direct the play. But now it is so evidently a one-sided affair, that there can be no amusement for any one."

Stung by the bitterness of the remark, Lapere tartly replied, "that if Mr. Grafton was suffering from his losses, he would relieve him, from such distress, by paying them himself." Excited by wine, and his morbid temper being aroused, Grafton replied by saying, "If I had not known that our adversaries were gentlemen, I should have supposed you were acting the part of a stool-pigeon, and were playing into their hands. As it is, sir, I have only to remark, that I despise your insinuations, and can only attribute your conduct to low-breeding and ignorance." He then tossed his wine in his face, saying he trusted it would cool his impertinence. Lapere rose from the table, his creole blood boiling with rage, and remarked, "that a friend of his, would call upon Mr. Grafton on the following morning."

Grafton seemed to have completely regained his self-possession, and laughingly remarked, that he should soon have the pleasure

of being run through or shot in the most approved method, but that if Mr. Lapere, was as little skilled, or as careless in the use of his weapons, as he was with his cards, he had only to fear for himself, from some chance-shot, or random-pass of the small sword. In fulfillment of his promise, early on the following day, Mr. Girod, as the friend of Mr. Lapere, called upon Grafton, with a hostile message. With perfect coolness, he politely requested Mr. Girod to be seated, and having read the note, he referred him to his friend Col. Clarke, who, he trusted, would with him settle all preliminaries satisfactorily.

He then, in his blandest manner, asked him to take wine with him, and hoped that their acquaintance, now somewhat untowardly commenced, might not terminate with this affair. Grafton had instructed Col. Clarke to take no advantage which he might have a right to as the challenged party, but to give to Mr. Lapere the choice of weapons, the time and place of meeting. With him it was a matter of indifference, and if not, as he had, perhaps, first given the insult, it was but right, that a choice in all these particulars, should be given to his adversary. The weapons selected were rifles, at sixty paces, and the meeting to take place on the following morning, immediately after sunrise. The evening before the duel, Col. Clarke called upon Grafton and passed some hours with him. He never appeared more gay and cheerful, and in vain did the colonel attempt to direct his mind to the interesting event of the morrow. He merely said, all his affairs were arranged in the event of the duel proving fatal to himself, and that he required no preparation, as he would listen to the instructions, always given to the principals on the ground by one of the seconds. He spoke of the delightful society of New Orleans, its hospitality, of the charming party of Mrs. McLane, and that he should ever remember with pleasure the acquaintances he had made upon that occasion. His far-sighted views, in regard to the immense resources of the capital of Louisiana, surprised Col. Clarke, he

assuring him, that in a quarter of a century, it would be one of the most important commercial cities in the Union.

"No man," said he, "can cast his eye over the immense territory, as fertile as any land beneath the sun, all of which, through the Mississippi, must become tributary to New Orleans, without perceiving that it will be almost unlimited in the extent of its commerce."

And thus the evening passed pleasantly away, as if the morrow's sun was to awaken him to scenes of peace and duty. At daylight, Col. Clarke found Grafton dressed, and with coffee upon the table, that their engagement might not be interrupted.

A carriage was at the door, waiting to bear them to the fatal field of honor. Arriving at the ground, and alighting, they waited a few moments, when Mr. Lapere and Girod made their appearance. Grafton saluted Lapere in a most dignified and respectful manner, when the seconds at once proceeded with the preliminaries of the duel. All these being over, the principals took their places, and at the word "one," given by Girod, Lapere shot and his ball tore up the grass, at the feet of Grafton, without doing him any injury.

Grafton had reserved his fire, and seeing a large bird, hovering over the head of Lapere, he raised his rifle, and as Girod pronounced the word, "fire," he shot, and the object, at which he aimed, fell quivering at the feet of his adversary.

Col. Clarke now insisted that the duel should proceed no further, that Mr. Grafton had done all required by the code of honor, and that further prosecution of the duel, would look like a simple desire for vengeance. After consulting with Lapere, Girod replied that his principal insisted upon another shot—that he should attribute to a want of courage any attempts at an amicable arrangement. These words were overheard by Grafton, and muttering "poor fool, why will he rush upon his fate," with a look of defiance in his burning eye, again took his place in front

of Lapere. Holding his rifle with a firm grasp, at the words "are you ready," he raised his weapon, and scarcely had the word "one" passed the lips of Girod, the rifle's sharp report was heard, and Lapere fell dead upon the field. With one mingled look of pity and contempt upon his victim, he ordered his carriage, and drove back to his lodgings in the city.

Sadly and slowly the friends of the brave and gallant Lapere bore his remains to the house of his now nearly distracted mother, for he was her only son, and she was a widow.

The day succeeding the dúel, the following announcement appeared in one of the papers of the city: "An affair of honor, came off at 'The Oaks,' yesterday morning at sunrise, between one of our most popular and gallant young creoles, and a planter. Weapons, rifles, at sixty paces. Two shots were exchanged, at the second fire, young —— fell, and immediately expired. The affair has caused a deep sensation, as one of the parties belonged to a highly respectable family, and with him, perishes the last scion of a noble stock.

"We understand that everything was conducted with great fairness and propriety upon the ground. At the first fire, some amicable arrangement was attempted, but the insult was so wanton and aggravated, that reconciliation was impossible. We forbear further comments upon the melancholy proceedings. It will be remarked that one of the parties bears the same name with that of the hero of a most tragic tale of suffering and death, recently published by us, from the pen of our Attakapas correspondent."

The fang of a serpent could not have inflicted a wound half as fatal to the peace of Grafton as this little squib in a daily newspaper. His haughty, sensitive spirit quivered, as he held the paper in his hand. His face was almost white with rage, and he walked his room, uttering the most bitter maledictions upon the head of the editor. And yet how absurd, to get up a quarrel with *an irresponsible* conductor of a newspaper, said Grafton to himself.

He would tauntingly reply, that he had given a fair version of the duel, and but adverted to a circumstance which at the time excited a deep and general interest. "'Our Attakapas correspondent,' and who is he? I have my suspicions, and if they prove true, no power shall rescue him from my revenge. Mr. Attorney Burns, you had better not cross my path. The taste of blood has aroused my lion heart, and its appetite shall be appeased."

Fruitless were the attempts made by Grafton, to learn the authorship of the letter, which had so excited his ire. He now fancied that his history was upon the tongue of every man he met, and that he was shunned, as the author of crimes, of the blackest dye. He hastened his preparations for leaving the city, preferring even the gloom and desolation of Côte Blanche to a longer residence, under such circumstances, in town.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE interest of a narrative, depends mainly upon the qualities of those, who chiefly figure in it. We are deeply impressed by the good or ill success of the various characters in the drama, as we see, clearly and vividly, their person and their minds before us, and can form some opinion as to their rule of conduct. We, therefore, bespeak the indulgence of our readers, while we present before them, the portraiture of one who may already have awakened their regard.

It was matter of no small surprise to those, who had, for years, been plodding on, with weary steps, in their professional career; who, by slow and toilsome progress, had reached to eminence in the practice of the law, that Mr. William Burns in his first forensic effort, should take a place, if not *primus inter pares*, at least not a whit behind the foremost. But they were little aware of those rare powers of intellect, with which he had been endowed, and of that cultivation, which can alone enable those powers to perform their highest functions. From earliest years, his mother had taught him, that the great secret of education was, to think deeply and correctly. She encouraged the curiosity, native to childhood, and no tale was read by him, but she instructed him as to its moral; no plaything amused him, without, at the same time, furnishing aliment to his tender, yet ingenuous mind. The mimic ship which affection gave him, was not merely to float in the little trough of water for his amusement; it taught him how continents were *discovered*, how the seas were navigated, and naval battles fought,

so that the names of Columbus, of Decatur, and of Perry, were associated with his earliest and fondest recollections. But we have not time to dwell upon this seed-time of life, vital as it is for weal or woe; nor to follow him through his academic career, in which all the high hopes and expectations of his friends were fully realized. We will stay but a moment, to remark, that he adopted as his rule of study, to read but few books, and to read those well and thoroughly. He had studied, for instance, the Oration of Demosthenes for the crown, as he studied a proposition of Euclid, analyzing it, and making himself understand, if possible, in what lay the wondrous power, the matchless success of the great orator. And Milton furnished his mind with that magnificent imagery, those strong and felicitous expressions, which so glow upon every page of the Paradise Lost. The Bible and Shakespeare were ever read with fresh delight, and, apart from all other advantages, gave him a beauty of style, and a knowledge of the hidden springs of the heart, quite remarkable. To the old pure wells of English literature he resorted, to slake the burning thirst of his intellect, passing by those broken cisterns, which hold no water. When, as a student of law, he cast his eye upon those massive columns of legal lore piled up in the lawyer's library, his heart would have misgiven him, his courage would have failed, had he not assured himself, that in some comparatively few elementary works, he could find the principles, which ingenuity had hammered out, and expanded, until a page of the old terse law writer should fill a folio of a modern compiler. The thoroughly reasoned opinions in which eminent judges embodied the learning of the law, masterpieces of juridical science, and classical taste, he studied with greatest enthusiasm. And when he decided to make his home in Louisiana, where a different system of law prevailed from that to which his attention had been directed at the law school, he repaired to the fountains of

the civil law, making himself master of that great body of legal ethics in the Pandects of Justinian, and the luminous commentaries of Pothier and Duranton, upon that code, in which the wonderful genius and industry of Napoleon caused to be gathered, from almost chaotic materials, and to be embodied in a precise and accurate form, the great rules of right, which should govern mankind in the varied transactions of life. With such a mind, so trained, and stored, he could safely enter upon that vast arena, where are marshalled for the conflict the most powerful intellects. His bright and keen falchion had not, it is true, been drawn from its scabbard; but polished as it was, and in the hands of one so adroit and skillful, he had little cause to fear an opponent. And as his profession required that there should not only be laid up these large intellectual stores, but that he should possess the somewhat rare faculty of using his knowledge, as his was to be the task of leading men's minds, most diligently did he study the rhetorician's art, as it has come down to us from the great masters of eloquence. Could you have seen his face glow, as he read and re-read that unrivalled specimen of popular oratory, the speech of Mark Antony over the body of Cæsar, which the sweet bard of Avon has given us, you might have perceived that he was preparing himself to

"Steal men's hearts."

And that he would have:—

——"Action, utterance, and the power of speech,
To stir men's blood."

In figure and in person he was not unlike the Roman consul. Tall and erect, his closely knit and contracted frame, was strikingly imposing. His handsome head, gracefully sitting upon the

firm, full neck; his black hair curling over his ample brow, and his keen eye, flashing with the prophet's fire; the dark lineaments of the face, lighted up by the lamp of his mind, he at once impressed you with an interest of no ordinary character.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FATHER, do tell me," said Louise, "what mystery there is about that letter you received this morning, which seems to afford you such sly amusement."

"Oh, it was only upon business, which, perhaps, you might be better prepared to reply to than I. But as it was addressed to myself, and from a professional gentleman, it may be as well to give a guarded answer. Possibly you know the handwriting;" and he showed her the envelope. She remarked "she was as ignorant of the chirography, as of the contents of the epistle."

"You say, father, that the curiosity of a lady is well-nigh insatiable; why, then," said Louise, "tempt us, by first exciting desire, and then cruelly withholding the gratification of it, particularly when it is about so insignificant an affair as a communication upon business."

Rallying Louise, as he had accomplished his object, he left the young ladies to reply to this letter, which deeply affected the future fate and happiness of his eldest daughter. The arrival of William Burns a few days after was the consequence of this correspondence. His coming was welcomed with that generous hospitality so grateful to a visitor, and although the pulsations of the heart of Louise were somewhat quickened, she little dreamed that the letter, with which her father had teased her a few days before, had anything to do with this agreeable reunion.

"I am glad, Mr. Burns," said Louise, "that the monotony of *Oak Lawn, did not* give you such a distaste for it, as to deprive

us of a second visit. You are just in time for a party given by Mrs. Montégre, and delighted will Blanche and myself be, as we will not now necessarily be wall flowers in that brilliant assembly."

"Nothing would give me more pleasure than to be accepted as your gallant on the evening indicated."

"I have only," said Louise, "to advise you to guard well your heart, if you have any desire to retain it, for the fascinating and bewitching young ladies you will meet with to night are so accustomed to conquest, that most of our gay cavaliers at once lay down all opposition, and surrender at discretion."

"But suppose, Miss Louise, they find the citadel already successfully assailed, and in the possession of some fair conqueror?"

"Open and avowed allegiance," replied Louise, "alone confer rights that are respected. A mere preference insures no protection, so I advise you, if at your home, or in the New England, you love so well, there dwells some fair one in whose ear you have breathed the tender vow, look well to your fidelity, for to-night it will be put to a test most trying."

"I must admit," said Burns, "that I am under the influence of a spell or incantation that laughs to scorn all resistance, and am now at the mercy of another. Yet I have not found sufficient courage to make an avowal. Preferring to suffer the pangs of suspense, than risk all upon an offer."

"And think you," said Louise, "that your fair inamorata knows not all, or do you prefer to 'let concealment, like the worm in the bud, feed on your damask cheek?' I suspect your sex is made of sterner stuff than roseleaves, and that all hope and peace will not fade and perish from the icy breath of unrequited affection."

"Such is very apt to be the judgment," said Burns, "of those, who being quite secure themselves in the possession of absolute power, smile upon the fears and sufferings of their subjects. I

shall feel myself quite safe from the assaults of beauty, shielded as I shall be by my fair companion."

"Do you promise to make confession, true and full, after the ordeal is passed, Mr. Burns?"

"Yes, complete and ample, and at every hazard."

Necessary might have been the warnings of Louise, had not the heart of her listener been all her own, for brilliant with beauty, and sparkling with wit and witching manners, were the fair enchantresses in the elegant saloons of Mrs. Montégre that night, and cold would have been the nature, that could have resisted the power of their fascination. Were not the susceptible feelings of Louise a little uneasy, as she saw before her, a face, radiant with smiles and beauty, and lit up with delight, as she was listening to the conversation of William Burns. If not, why with an air of abstraction did she pay so little heed to the flattering and playful badinage of George Manners, and by an ill-timed remark, discover that her thoughts were elsewhere, at the very time that her gallant admirer fancied he was making a decided impression. Although she would scarcely admit to herself the deep interest with which the handsome, gifted advocate had inspired her, yet she could not feel quite easy, when she saw him exposed to shafts in the hands of so experienced an archer. She might indeed have considered herself safe enough, as she so often caught his eye fixed steadily upon herself, and his most winning smile reserved for such recognition. Upon their return home, Louise playfully remarked to Burns as they sat in an embrasure of the window, "now for the confession you promised before we started for the party. Was not your heart taken captive by the smiles of beauty?"

"Yes, but it was the same sweet smile that months since quite entranced me, that now fills my whole being with rapture, and without which, life would be dark indeed. Make me, Miss Louise,

the happiest of mortals by a smile of assent, while I ask your acceptance of a heart all your own."

The mantling blushes which crimsoned the face of Louise, and the wild, tumultuous beatings of her bosom, showed that she was not prepared for this *éclaircissement.*

"I have the permission of your father, Miss Louise, in the proposal I have dared to make; may I not hope that you will ratify that assent?"

"You need no formal acceptance, Mr. Burns, no assurance, that your love is all reciprocated. I suspect my conduct at the party of Mrs. Montégre must have betrayed the partiality I felt for you, as I confess, I was then full of apprehension, and again and again lamented that I had exposed you to the influence of such charming young ladies. Now that it is over, my pride is gratified that you were proof against such magic arts as there must have assailed you."

"Had not my heart been all preoccupied," said Burns, "and had not you been present, I might have felt deeply the power of fascinating ladies, but not without reason was I rallied by the handsome Miss Lefroy as she detected the glances of my eyes." An hour filled up with agreeable confessions quickly passed, when Mr. Lefort came in upon our lovers, and telling Louise that her mother desired her presence, she bade good night to her too happy lover,

"Now, I suppose," said Blanche, "you will not be quite so coy, Louise, when I speak of the attentions of Mr. Burns."

"The only way I can relieve myself," said Louise, "from all annoyance, is by confession, so I will tell you frankly, William has offered, and I have accepted."

"Oh! Louise, why did you not tease him a little? When you were sure of his preference, and felt certain of his love, then it would have been so nice to throw in some *buts* and *ifs*, till he was tortured a little with apprehension. If I were a fish I would not be caught but by the most skillful angler, and until he had exposed

every retreat, and with the utmost pains and care taken me most winningly from the water."

Now that Burns was regarded as the accepted lover of Louise, he rendered himself irresistibly attractive to each member of that family. His delicate, respectful attentions to Mrs. Lefort, and the eagerness with which he entered into all the arrangements of Blanche, won for him their most affectionate regard. Already did Blanche treat him as a brother.

"But you must understand," she said to him, "in this early stage of your engagement, that you are not to take Louise away from us. We could not possibly get along without her. Mother has so long depended upon her in all our domestic arrangements, and she has been so constantly my companion, that we could not be reconciled to her departure."

"We have not," said Burns, "so far advanced in our future as to talk of home, separate from this most delightful abode. I shall leave all these questions to be settled, when time and occasion demand it."

"You must, now, Mr. Burns," said Mrs. Lefort, "look upon this as your home. Our little family could not be deprived of one of its members, without leaving a void, which would bring sadness to all our hearts. I only gave my consent to any proposition, looking to matrimonial results, but upon the express condition that our family circle was not to be broken by the loss of one of its members." "Mr. Burns and myself," said Mr. Lefort, "will arrange all this. It is hardly fair just now to press upon him a decision upon this matter, just at this moment. We have a strong ally in Louise, and need not fear that she will fail in any fair and proper request at the hands of Mr. Burns."

The position that he now occupied at the bar as an advocate and a jurist were such, that his services were always eagerly sought in any controversy before the courts. He had formed such a professional connection, as relieved him from all the mere details

of business, and by spending a day or two in his office each week, he could comply with all the wishes of his clients. The sessions of the courts being but few through the year, he had ample leisure for the preparation of his cases, and it mattered little in what part of the parish might be his residence. He could now employ his time so systematically, and in so undisturbed a manner, that without trenching upon his professional duties, he could devote that attention to the science of government, to the political affairs of the country, which had ever been with him an object most desirable. His popularity here opened for him a wide field, and he had but to thrust in his sickle and reap such harvest, as his talents and acquirements might win for himself. But we must for the present leave Oak Lawn, and its inmates, assuring our readers that here, as elsewhere, the course of law and politics, and, shall I name it in this connection, of love, smoothly ran on, as there was but little opportunity for misunderstanding or disappointment.

CHAPTER XXVII.

We pass over some years, in the story which we are relating; for it is impossible to dwell upon the every-day events, which go to make up the lives of individuals.

Many and interesting have been the vicissitudes, which have marked the lives and fortunes of those who have figured in the foregoing pages. "The smiles of joy, and tears of woe," have alternately brightened the pathway, or embittered the cup of those, in whose progress we have taken an interest. The engagement which had existed between William Burns and Louise Lefort, had received its happy termination—in renewing their vows at the altar, and hearing, from the lips of the holy man, the words which made them man and wife.

Three bright little cherubs cheer, with their glad voices, the cottage at Oak Lawn, and one is not.

The fell destroyer, snatched the first-born, when the opening flower gave promise of the ripened fruit. But those tears have dried, while with a softened melancholy, a lovely woman gazes upon that small grassy knoll, over which the tiny hands of a bright boy, and two smiling girls are flinging handfuls of wild flowers, and the mother's heart now is animated with a new joy, as she welcomes back from Congressional Halls, the idol of her bosom.

Happiness still presides at the hospitable board in the cottage of Lefort. Years have dealt kindly with the honored heads of that family, and but little are they changed from the time we first introduced them to our readers. William Burns has served his

first term in the councils of the nation, and fully realized the high expectations of his friends. His wife still possesses those charms, which rendered her so generally a favorite. No one of that household is so changed as Blanche. The bright, brilliant sallies of wit, which once sparkled in all her conversation, now seldom, if ever, are heard from her lips. Her face is not, as once it was, now glowing in the sunshine of a perpetual smile; sober thoughts have chased away the gladdening expression, that years ago beamed upon that lovely countenance. To all but those who, from closest intimacy, were permitted to read the revealings of her heart, there appeared but the change which time would work. To her sister, even, had Blanche, never by word, or scarcely by look, betrayed the secret, which was marring her happiness. She had favored the idea which Louise adopted, that Paris, with its attractions, was now remembered with more interest than ever, and that as she heard of exiles, returning to their native lands, their glittering honors, and their estates restored, she pined for a return to her earliest home. Little did she dream, that for years, Blanche had been cherishing, as a sweet vision, the return of Charles Grafton, and that again from his lips, she would hear those expressions of interest, which had fired her youthful fancy. She could not account for his long silence, his terribly protracted absence. We can only explain to the reader, by going back upon our history.

The conduct of Frank Grafton had been marked by such flagrant outrages, that he could be no longer tolerated in society. The midnight orgies, in which he often indulged, and the terrible conflicts which took place between the maddened revellers, was the subject of remark everywhere. He was regarded as desperate, as he was abandoned, and he was therefore shunned by all, except those who were as wicked as himself.

His bitterest hostility was aroused towards William Burns, and as he was now a member of the family of Lefort, it was natural

that he should regard, with no kindly feeling, those connected with him. Blanche had heard of some sneering remarks, which he had made concerning her father, which, in connection with his conduct, had rendered him an object of disgust.

Returning from an evening ride, she saw him approaching her, and stung by the bitterness of his unprovoked expressions concerning her father, she resolved to pass him without recognition. He drew up his handsome steed, and, with a most gracious bow, was about accosting her, when she passed him, as if he had been a perfect stranger. He was deeply chagrined and mortified by this cut direct.

"I will bide my time, Miss Haughty," he said to himself; "but, be sure, that for this slight, I will have complete and ample vengeance. And yet it is hard, for, I suppose, she is instructed by her starched old papa, or her virtuous brother-in-law. I can reach them through her, and she must be the victim."

Through the letters Frank Grafton received from his brother, and from what he had heard, when on visiting terms with the family, he was satisfied that there was a sentiment of more than mere friendship, between his brother and Blanche. He knew his sensitive nature, the depth and strength of his feelings, and was sure, that one as handsome and as gifted as he really considered Charles to be, would make an impression upon a girl like Blanche, of the strongest character. "And that love and admiration," said Frank to himself, "shall be nursed and strengthened, aye, a thousand fold, even in its hopelessness."

"I will direct the dart. The poison with which it is freighted shall be slow, yet sure, drying up, by slowest process, the fountain of life and happiness.

"In her, are centered the joy of the household of Lefort; they shall but guess at the cause of that grief, which is consuming the bloom upon that fair cheek, destroying those rounded, elegant pro-

portions, which now give such grace and beauty of form, to her whom they so fondly cherish.

"And yet is not this difficult of accomplishment? All the better. Will it not occupy those hours, which now are full of dark despondency, in which are ever floating before my imagination, the whitened corse of Emma, and the bloodless face, and staring eye of that poor fool, who forced me to take his life upon the field? And when, or where has the word *cannot*, intervened for the prevention of any coveted object which I had determined to accomplish?

"I sometimes feel as if some spirits from the dark abyss were connusant of my dark design; and from their horrid, murky caverns, forged the instruments by which they were to be consummated.

The dark, swarthy face of Grafton, gleamed with an almost unearthly expression, and a sardonic smile lighted up his features, as he thus spoke to himself.

"Ha, ha, ha, how shall my vengeance be glutted, and a new and darker page shall be written for the drama of life; and yet, I confess, it sometimes awakens remorse, that Charles, my only brother, whom I really love, and who has truly sympathized with me in my troubles, should necessarily partake of the ingredients of that cup, which I have mingled for others."

And he would then hesitate, as if a better sentiment, imprinted in earlier years upon his mind, and which the spirit of evil had not quite blotted out, was exerting an influence upon his fell purposes. But a more potent, because a more encouraged principle, would come to the rescue of this cherished object, furnishing arguments, and removing objections in the furtherance of his preconceived plans.

"The love of Charles will soon be obliterated in the presence of new objects of interest. He knew Blanche but a short time; there

was no engagement, and so far as he knew, no reciprocation of the sentiment, which he may have been indulging.

"Better for him to marry, in Virginia, a woman of high position and of wealth, American in her tastes and education. Such a connection will give him an enviable influence, and a standing in society. And how it would humble the lofty pride, and high pretensions of the emigrant family at Oak Lawn. Charles would soon forget a love, which may, for the moment, possess him, and my plans and doings would not essentially affect his happiness.

"And would not my good have been promoted, the lives of others saved, if some fortunate circumstance could have intervened to have prevented my marriage with Helen? I thought I loved her, that my whole existence would be a blank, without her society, and when she declined the proffer of my heart, the very skies above my head seemed as molten brass, and the solid earth but one great crater of burning lava.

But was not this all imaginary and unreal? for when by attentions, the most assiduous, an affectation of virtue, a mock humility, and by an assumed dejection, I had won her, I hardly thought her worth the wearing.

"Heigho! Charles must not thwart a project upon which hang results to me, so desirable."

By such considerations, all the objections, which ever arose in his mind, were met and obviated. He now set to work, for the completion of his purpose, and to it, he gave the whole of his powerful intellect.

In his letters to Charles, while speaking of the society, in the neighborhood of Oak Lawn, of the parties that he had attended, he would give him most graphic descriptions. In praising the beauty and accomplishments of the ladies, he would remark upon the frivolity of the French character, their ladies are so volatile, so fond of coquetry, so gratified by the power of making a con-

quest, that they lose that charm, which forms part of the character of our native born, American ladies.

He would allude to the matches, *de convenance*, so general in French families; that scarcely ever with them was marriage an affair of the heart, but family, wealth, or high position, were the surest of success, where rival suitors were offering their *devoirs* at the shrine of beauty. He spoke of the family of Lefort, and that they were pursuing the even tenor of their way, that it was said, the family were greatly disappointed in their ambitious expectations of Burns, as he had settled down upon the honors and fame won in a county court; that like most men, when not incited by the spur of ambition, or necessity, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of ease, and in the comforts of his home, at Lefort's, gladly found recreation from the cares of business. He added that Blanche was as gay and full of romance as ever, and lived only to gratify the wishes of her father. He adroitly remarked, that after toying with dozens of young Creoles, she was now regarded as the special object of interest, of a very wealthy planter, whom the family had been courting, most assiduously, and whose influence and position were by them greatly coveted.

By this means, he intended to wean his brother from all those prepossessions which he might have indulged for Blanche, and induce him to bury in forgetfulness, as idle day dreams, all his expectations of a marriage with her.

He now mingled more than ever in society. To the acquaintances of his brother Charles, he spoke of the great success he was attaining, as a popular debater in his native State. He had been greatly gratified by the complimentary notices, which the leading papers were giving of his speeches, in discussions with some of the far-famed orators of Virginia. He was told that Charles was greatly caressed, and now a general favorite in society. He said he was sorry to know, as his letters to him indicated, that he was astonished that he could ever have felt an interest in

Louisiana scenes, or relished society, so limited in their ideas—that the very scenery of Virginia, so grand and beautiful was most inspiring, and had awakened within him those energies, which were nearly paralyzed by the enervating effect of a southern climate.

To a young lady, who had ever been envious of the attractions of Blanche, and who had been stung, by the preferences she had unwittingly secured from some young beau, he addressed the following conversation:

"I am glad Mr. Grafton," said Miss Eloise Florian, "that you have abandoned your recluse life and now add to the general joy of our society by your presence."

"I thank you, Miss Eloise," said Grafton, "for the kindness of your remark. If I could repay but half the pleasure which I derive from the hospitality of those whose invitations afford me so much gratification, I should not feel myself to be so great a debtor."

"We shall all be happy, Mr. Grafton, if we can indulge the belief, that the obligation is but mutual. Do tell me when you heard from your charming brother?"

"He writes me frequently, said Mr. Grafton."

"Does he hold out no promise of a return to Louisiana?" said Eloise. "I might perhaps have acquired this information from another quarter, but some young ladies are so coy, and affect such an air of indifference, that I dislike to gratify them, by inquiries, as if they alone had the power of enlightening us poor mortals."

"Your sex, I suspect, are not entirely free from a spice of jealousy, Miss Eloise, at least I judge so from observation. Let me bespeak your indulgence, for I see from the curl upon your lip, that you regard the remark as personal. Am I pardoned?"

"Certainly, Mr. Grafton. I was not aware that I discovered any feeling," said Eloise, "for you will permit me to say, that of all ladies, those to whom I alluded, would be the last to excite

enmity or jealousy in my bosom. But pray tell me of your brother."

"He has decided," said Grafton, "to remain in Virginia. I fear he has been too much flattered by some success, as a public speaker there, and will give up all expectation of a return to Louisiana."

"Has he become a politician?" said Eloise. "I suppose we shall soon hear of him, as a distinguished member of Congress."

"He has always had a fondness," said Grafton, "for public discussion. Virginia, you know, has ever been famous as the nursery of eloquence, and statesmanship. I suspect Charles has done as others have before him, given himself up, heart and soul, to public affairs."

"Oh, no!" said Eloise, "if I have not been misinformed, he had disposed of his heart, before bidding adieu to Louisiana. A certain fair lady at Oak Lawn, is said to be possessor of that precious bauble. Am I rightly informed upon the subject, Mr. Grafton?"

"Had you heard that my brother was engaged to Miss Lefort?" said Grafton, "for I suppose that is the fair *demoiselle*, to whom you referred."

"Perhaps not precisely an engagement," replied Eloise, "but a sort of understanding, depending upon the assent of the young lady. Tell me, Mr. Grafton, am I correct?"

"I scarcely know," said Grafton, "whether I ought to answer your queries. I fear I may betray the confidence of my brother, although he enjoined no secrecy. But with the promise that you will keep it, at least for the present, as a secret, I will tell you."

"Trust me, Mr. Grafton, I will be as close as an oyster."

"If my brother ever entertained a preference for any lady in Louisiana, sure I am, that all is now forgotten. He laughed at his sentimental, lackadaisical conversations with Miss Lefort, and says 'he is glad that they made no impression upon her memory, or heart.'"

"Has he any other alliance in view?" said Eloise.

"My brother, like all sensible men, sees the great advantage he might acquire by a marriage with one of wealth and position. In Virginia, where they pride themselves so much upon family, and high connection, it is all important to a young aspirant for popular favor, to be well connected. He has so ingratiated himself into the favor of one of the senators in Congress, by a bold, able and successful defence of his political course, that he seeks every opportunity to promote the views of Charles. And I heard incidentally, the other day, that he was regarded as the accepted suitor for the hand of his high-born, elegant, and accomplished daughter."

"Oh! how it will nettle Miss Blanche when she hears this news," said Eloise.

"I hope she will not learn it with displeasure, for I do not suppose, she feels any interest in the love affairs of my brother. They were good friends, while he was here, and she will now rejoice in his success."

Well did Frank Grafton know that hours would not intervene, before the secret he had revealed, would reach the ears of Blanche, and his conversation would be repeated with all the glosses, requisite to make it sufficiently distasteful to her. He was too much of a master of the human heart not to be aware, that the rival would be swift to publish information, which would tend to the disadvantage of one, who had marred her prospects.

Rightly had he judged, for soon after he saw Miss Eloise in close converse with Miss Burns, and he knew from the expression of the countenances of the parties, that his object was being fully accomplished.

How more than gratified would have been his fiendish disposition, could he have listened to the conversation we are about to relate.

"Who would have believed," said Mrs. Burns, "that Charles Grafton, would so soon have forgotten all his friends in Louisiana!

I confess his long silence somewhat surprised me, but I attributed it to the conduct of his brother."

"How do you know that he has forgotten us?" said Mr. Lefort.

"I had a long conversation," said Louise, "last evening with Eloise Florian, who seems to be fully acquainted with the pursuits and feelings of Charles Grafton, though she says she is not permitted, at present, to give her authority. There is such minuteness in all her statements, that it seems impossible to doubt their correctness."

"What did she say to you, Louise?"

"She informed me of the distinction Charles was now winning, as a public debater, that he was greatly caressed and flattered, and that he had, by his fine talents and accomplishments, won the heart, and been promised the hand, of one of the greatest belles of Virginia. That her large wealth and high position in society, would insure for Grafton the political success, which his ambition now coveted. This I had expected, but I confess, I was surprised, that he should have so far forgotten all decency, as to have sneered at intimacies he had formed in Louisiana, and laughed at the idea of being caught by a little French emigrant, with a pretty foot and face."

"I can hardly believe the story, asserted by Eloise. I have seen," said Mr. Lefort, "reports of his speeches in the Richmond papers, accompanied by high eulogiums. His long silence would, it is true, indicate that he had forgotten us, but from the noble qualities of head and heart, developed by his conversation, I could scarcely credit what has been said of his conduct towards us."

During all this conversation, Blanche manifested but little interest, and yet, her heart was tortured by the idea, that Charles had ceased to think of her with regard. She would not permit herself to believe in the bitter sarcasm, as related by Eloise, but greatly feared, that the heart of her former lover had been won by the attractions of wealth and distinction.

"He might have been mine," she said to herself. "I was only

to permit him the expression of his love, and he would have gladly offered me his hand and heart. But if distance can so soon have changed him, if in absence, he has forgotten all those ties, which bound him to Oak Lawn, better that I should thus early have learned his disposition and character, and not have shipwrecked all future happiness by trusting to one so fickle and so false. And yet do I not too harshly judge him? May he not have supposed from my conduct that I felt for him no interest?

"I would not permit him to express the hope that when success should crown his future career with honor, that he might then expect to win a love, for which, he said he would willingly spend years of the most arduous toil. If from me, he could receive no encouragement, if the whole future of his existence was to be cheered by no ray of hope, that the love, which glowed in his own bosom, could be reciprocated, is it strange, that he should now be basking in the smile of some fair one, who would appreciate his worth? I will not believe in the scandal, which has been uttered concerning one, so noble and so disinterested. He is not false. He has broken no vow; he has slighted no promise.

"Worthily will he wear the honors conferred upon him by an admiring people, and with all my heart do I wish that his name may be inscribed upon the highest niche in the Temple of Fame."

The principal apprehensions Frank Grafton now felt, for the success of this villainous scheme, were, that Charles might write to Mr. Lefort or to Blanche, and so all his plans would be frustrated.

It now seemed as if the agency of the spirit of darkness was leagued with him, for on this very evening, a gentleman from Virginia arrived at his house, with letters of introduction from Charles, and inclosing a letter to Mr. Lefort.

It is impossible to describe the gratification of Frank, at this unexpected and joyous event.

His great happiness so excited him, that his welcomes to the stranger were most warm and cheering.

He told him, he could hardly give him time to make his toilet for dinner, so anxious was he, to hear from his brother. Ordering a servant to take the luggage of Mr. Stevenson, he accompanied him to his room, and said he should impatiently await his return to the parlor.

With what eagerness did Grafton eye the letter of his brother to Lefort; he clutched it, as if he were afraid, that it would take wing and leave him.

He broke the seal and rapidly devoured the contents of the following letter.

"RICHMOND 1*st June*, 18——

"F. LEFORT, ESQ.

"Dear Sir—May I indulge the hope that my long absence from Louisiana has not quite obliterated all trace of remembrance of one, upon whose heart and memory are engraved the sense of attentions, most kind and courteous, cordially extended to him, by yourself and family. Mournful as will ever be some of the recollections that link me to your adopted State, there are others, which throw a sweet and softened light upon scenes ever before my vision.

"How beautiful are the offerings of disinterested kindness. They are the green spots, upon the arid wastes. Like the sparkling waters from the fountain to the poor wayfarer, were the hospitalities received by me, a stranger at Oak Lawn. They will ever be among the most cherished of my remembrances. But while gratitude was inspired by conduct, so disinterested, will you permit me to say that a warmer sentiment grew up in my heart, that now earnestly craves your approval.

"I need hardly add, that the graces of mind and manner, the delightful and constant exhibitions of a most generous nature, and the witching wiles of surpassing beauty, which all meet in your daughter Blanche, were the origin and aliment of that sentiment. The hope of winning her regard has been the main spring of all my exertions, making light the severest toil, and dispersing discouragement, which would otherwise have caused me to falter, while ascending the steep, upon whose rugged brow, smiles Fame's fair temple. Pursuing the avenues, which she laughingly remark-

ed were opened before me, I have been far more successful than my merits deserve. The partiality of my friends, has secured for me a seat in Congress. My property, now affords me a handsome income. May I not venture to hope you will permit me, to come to Louisiana, and seek in the smiles of Miss Blanche, that happiness, which wealth or honors are inadequate to confer.

"With my kindest regards to Mrs. Lefort and your family, permit me to subscribe myself,

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"CHARLES GRAFTON."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Frank Grafton had no time for the indulgence of feelings, hich were almost irrepressible. It required all his strong mind, rtile as it was in expedients, and accustomed to put on, at will, ıose disguises, which might be passing within it, to conceal his notions. The return of Mr. Stevenson from his chamber, found rafton wearing his blandest smile and, apparently, only intent pon learning of his brother's welfare.

"When did you leave Virginia, Mr. Stevenson?" said Grafton, and what news do you bring us?"

"It is now six weeks, since I parted with your brother in Richıond, and though a little worn with the fatigues incident to an lectioneering campaign, he is, I believe, as sound as a dollar."

"In whose election did he take so deep an interest?" inquired Grafton.

"Why! in his own," said Stevenson. "Were you not aware hat he was a candidate for Congress? In a most exciting canass, and his opponent connected with one of the most influential milies of the county, he has been elected by a most triumphant ıajority."

"I am gratified, as well as surprised, by the information you ive me," said Grafton. "Pray tell me the particulars of the ontest."

"Your brother had made himself widely and favorably known y a tour through the State with several politicians, during which e daily addressed the people in defence of the votes of one of

our senators, upon some question of policy. He brought to the discussion, such a fund of political knowledge, such versatility of talent, such unanswerable arguments, that all were taken by surprise by this new actor upon the political stage."

"What is the manner of my brother?" said Grafton.

"His elocution is manly, yet fervid, his arguments, so clear, cogent and convincing, his illustrations all natural and beautiful, his allusions so classical and elegant, that his audience are carried away by the charms of his surpassing eloquence, in the very outset of his speech. He then delights them with wit, burnished and sparkling, now employing that irony, which covers his opponent with ridicule, or unsheathing the flashing blade of sarcasm, lays bare the sophistical, and ill considered positions of his adversary. He is ever perfect master of his subject. His eye flashes with the eagle's fire, as he turns his bold triumphant look upon the assailant of the cause he has espoused."

"I suspect," said Grafton, "the partiality of friendship colors with a somewhat rosy hue, your description of my brother's oratory."

"No," said Stevenson, "this is now the general sentiment, and some of the opponents of the old senator quaintly remark, that the election of young Grafton was the great desire of the former, that he might find some one, who could, with a show of success, defend a course at war with the opinion of nine tenths of the people. When your brother was first nominated, his opponent laughed at such a contest. A man unknown, without family or wealth, to think of contending for the seat, which he had occupied for years, was simply ridiculous. But no man, he found, could withstand the power, which the burning eloquence, the fascinating manners, and the wonderful mental acquisitions, gave to Charles Grafton, and he has submitted, with as much grace as possible, to a most disastrous defeat."

The conversation now turned to various topics, and with a power,

which Stevenson little suspected, Grafton took into his own hands, the direction of the thoughts, and even wishes of his guest.

Grafton invited Stevenson to ride with him over the island. Stevenson was surprised with the extent of its fertility, and admired, as all must, the natural beauties, clustering about it. He was surprised by the perfect clock-work method, in the labor of the slaves, without any overseer, and all working with the apparent harmony and precision of a well-regulated machine.

He explained to him, all the minutiæ of the culture of the cane, the making of sugar, the expenditures of the plantation, and the profits derived upon the general outlay of capital and labor.

"It is," said Stevenson, "a most profitable investment, and though, now, it is the warmest of summer weather, the constant breeze from the gulf, renders the air perfectly delightful. I have never enjoyed such dreamy happiness, as when yesterday after dinner you invited me to take a siesta in the hammock, swinging in the wide and cool veranda of your tasteful cottage. You have the finest sea-food I have found anywhere, while the wild game so abundant, furnishes you with every luxury. I know not when I have seen a place combining so many advantages."

"And yet I am tired of it," said Grafton, "although I am aware it possesses attractions, which can scarcely be found anywhere in the country. I lead an isolated life, and feel that I am acquiring the habits and disposition of a recluse."

"Well," said Stevenson, "I wish I could find such a property, seeking a purchaser. If you ever sell, promise me, Grafton, that I shall have the first offer."

"Oh! as for that, I feel that I am working for Charles. The great expenses connected with the life of a politician, particularly, if he intends, as he writes, trying his luck in the lottery of matrimony, will require the income of some profitable investment, and, well managed, none will give so good a return as ours, at Côte Blanche."

"Ah! it is as I suspected," said Stevenson. "Cupid success-

fully laid siege to a citadel, invulnerable to all attack but his, and he has fallen beneath the potent smiles of the elegant daughter of our senator. I shrewdly suspect, that the magic beauty of the belle of Richmond inspired the eloquence of your gifted brother. It was so reported, when I left home, but from some rumors afloat, on his first return from Louisiana, it was supposed he had left his heart behind him."

"Oh, no!" said Grafton, "I believe while here, he indulged in some flirtations; but our young French girls are like our humming-birds, they sip honey from every opening blossom. In other words, their little love affairs are the occupation of idle hours, while their matrimonial concerns are always regulated by their mammas and papas, and ever with an eye to the main chance."

Grafton was highly gratified that Stevenson regarded Charles as engaged in Virginia. He would turn this knowledge to account.

On the following day, he rode with Stevenson over the parish, telling him, that in one ride he could form his opinions, as to the people and the country, as well as if he had lived in the neighborhood a twelvemonth.

He introduced him, for his own purposes, to Miss Eloise Florian, remarking that he was but recently from Virginia, and a particular friend of his brother's.

"And now, Miss Eloise," said he, "Mr. S. can fully inform you of my brother, of his pursuits, and purposes."

Just as he expected, with apparent unconcern, she drew from him, the very information, which Frank would have desired. He spoke of Charles Grafton, as "filling a large space in the public eye; that he was generally regarded as the most rising young man in the State, and that he had just been elected to Congress.

He said, that it was understood, that Mr. Grafton was about to lead to the altar, Miss S., a young lady of surpassing beauty and accomplishments, who, he doubted not, would be the

reigning belle at Washington, during the coming winter. "And yet, I am surprised," said Stevenson, "that the charm of a southern residence, and, more than all, the fascinating ladies of Louisiana, had not retained one, so enthusiastic as Charles Grafton, in this delightful section of the country."

"We thought at one time," said Eloise, "that he had been bound in the silken meshes of love; but he probably found the conquest too easy, and withdrew before his own heart was touched, whatever might have been the result to another."

"The wound was not probably deep," said Stevenson; "for rarely will you find the victim in your sex."

With impatient eagerness, did Charles Grafton await the arrival of a reply to his letter to Lefort.

He had felt some misgivings from the tone of the letters of his brother; and he knew generally, from education and habit, that no small spice of fickleness entered into the composition of the character of the natives of *la belle France.*

Books and association had taught him, also, that the heart of the daughter, was very much in the keeping of the mother, and that the *staple* qualities possessed a large preponderance over the mere ornamental, in the selection of the husband.

"But surely," said Charles to himself, "such are not the characteristics of any of the family of Lefort.

"So great has been the transition from the gay, excited, and busy life of Paris, to the calm, unruffled, and contented existence, in their now secluded home, that dreams of ambition have all faded from his remembrance. And, if I am not greatly mistaken, Mr. and Mrs. Lefort look to a patriarchal home, their children and their children's children filling one house with glee, a united, loving, and happy family, as the realization of life's brightest dream."

This agreeable reverie was sadly dissipated, as he hastily broke the seal of the following letter.

But before its perusal, our readers will call to mind the circumstances, under which it was written.

It will be recollected, that the letter of Charles Grafton to Mr. Lefort never reached its destination; that it was handed, by Mr. Stevenson, to Frank Grafton, and by him opened and read, with the determination of frustrating any plan for a marriage between Charles and Blanche.

After reading the letter of Charles, he sat down to the composition of a reply; and this must be done so adroitly that no suspicion would be aroused, as to its authorship.

By the aid of certain letters of invitation, which he had received from Lefort, Grafton found no difficulty in imitating the chirography of the former.

With all the assiduity and patience of a schoolboy, did Frank copy these notes, until he could imitate them with the most perfect precision.

In the assumed hand of Lefort, he wrote the following reply to the letter of Charles.

Would not the cruel, hard heart of even Frank Grafton have softened, had he known the utter wretchedness and despair, which these few lines would occasion his brother. Carefully worded to shut out all hope, and to induce the belief that before a letter could possibly reach Louisiana, Blanche would be another's; the scheme was sure of success.

At this time, a month was considered a short period to make this then, almost interminable journey, so that he felt sure, that in passive despair, Charles would give up all further attempt to obtain the hand of Blanche.

How his expectations succeeded, will be seen in the sequel:—

OAK LAWN, 15*th July*, 18—

CHARLES GRAFTON, Esq.,

DEAR SIR—Your favor of the first of June last, has just reached me. Allow me to congratulate you upon the success, which is crowning

your political career. So long a time had intervened without hearing from you, we naturally concluded, that acquaintances, of so short a date as ourselves, had passed from your memory. We are much obliged to you, for your kind remembrances. I do not feel at liberty to advise your return to Louisiana, as the hand of my daughter is partially promised to one, who from his position and wealth, can assure her happiness in life. Her marriage will probably take place before this reaches you. Permit me to express the hope, that prosperity will ever smile upon your pathway in life.

With the regards of my family, allow me to subscribe myself,

Your obedient servant,

F. LEFORT.

The feelings of Charles may be more easily imagined than described, as his eye rested upon the last lines of the little missive, which he seemed to be unconsciously holding before his eyes.

"Marriage—Blanche—and is this the termination of those bright dreams, which have been gilding all my future, with rays of serenest light? Am I not to bask in the sunshine of her sweet smile? Is this the reward for days and nights of most wearisome toil, that I might win a name, worthy of her wearing? Oh, Blanche! how have you struck dead the warmest, noblest impulses of my heart! To what a tomb have you consigned those living, glowing affections, which were to have made up the happiness of my existence! With what devotion and truth did I linger about those bright memorials, which your loveliness had traced upon my heart! and they can never fade! They will never know inconstancy, or change. Ah, no,

'I would not change my buried love,
For any heart of living mould.'

And now a long farewell to visions of bliss, since the stern realities of life have revealed their emptiness. From severe studies

and occupations, I may look back upon these mournful memories, with chastened views, never again to trust my bark upon the tempestuous waters of an unknown treacherous sea."

Such were the sad reflections of Charles Grafton, that would find expression, even in the solitariness of his chamber. He would be alone. To no ear would he utter the voices of his soul.

A new era had commenced in his life. With renewed energy he entered upon his favorite pursuits, as if he would drown all recollections of events so fraught with bitterness. All the great political questions, which agitated the public mind, and which were likely to come before Congress, he examined with the minutest care. The deep and difficult questions growing out of finance, of political economy, the checks and balances provided by the Constitution, the forms of the Federal and State Governments, were his constant study. Never, as now, did he attend to the embellishments of style, the graces of oratory, while his manners and conversation even, became a subject of the most minute and careful attention. He devoted himself to the acquisition of modern languages, and became perfect master of them.

The French was a particular study, and he conversed in it with the elegance and fluency of a Parisian.

He reviewed his readings upon the history of France, examining, with great attention, the institutions, the interior polity of that wonderful people, and followed, with enthusiasm, the rapid and victorious marches of the greatest of earth's captains.

He sat down with him in his consultation with the most learned, and the wisest of his subjects, when framing that wonderful code, which the far-seeing, eagle-eye of Napoleon perceived would remain his truest monument.

"Yes," said Grafton, "when the most brilliant conquest has faded from human recollection, and Marengo, and the Bridge of Lodi, be remembered only as a melancholy computation of how

h of suffering and woe might be required to sate the mad
ition of a military chieftain, this colossal statue, built up by
ıing and talent, would survive the ruin of empires, and upon
ıoble front would be written, in imperishable characters, the
e of

NAPOLEON.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The bitter and severe disappointment, which had fallen upon the hopes of Blanche, to the eye of the casual observer would never have been noticeable. Those who saw her in the nearer intimacies of relationship, could only have discovered it in the half suppressed sigh, which would, in spite of herself, escape from the depths of a heart, which had been pierced with unutterable anguish. Her manner had so gradually changed upon the departure of Charles Grafton, that to those, who saw her from day to day, nothing strange or peculiar was perceptible. But how striking would have been the contrast to him, who had seen her years ago on a return from a ride with Charles, her face lighted up with that joyous expression, full of hope, and secure in the possession of a love, which had been tendered her, and the Blanche of to-day, whose reflections were picturing a future, in which she felt herself doomed to linger out a miserable existence.

Niobe was all tears, but the tearless eye of Blanche might have revealed a sorrow, such as that imaged on the seared vision of despair. But the native pride of her character came to her aid, rescuing her from the fate of those, around whose hearts the serpent coil of disappointed affection has been fastened with a fatal tenacity.

"I will arouse myself," said she to herself, "and no longer yield to the influence of a sentiment, which I may not indulge. Surely there are other avenues to happiness, as yet, by me untried. A life of usefulness, consecrated to the good of others, seeking the

alleviation of those sorrows, which lie in the pathway of the poor and forsaken, such an existence will be crowned with a peace, unruffled by the wilder passions of our nature."

Blanche could not, like the Catholic maiden, seek, in the secret recesses of the cloister, forgetfulness of the object of her love, nor, in the gloomy chambers of the recluse, dream away an existence which should be devoted to active usefulness. Neither could her mind, strengthened and enlarged by a Protestant education, be hushed to a sort of mesmeric sleep, by the counting of beads, or unmeaning genuflections before the shrine of the Virgin. Life appeared, to her excited and cultivated intellect, a great stage, upon which she was to play her part in the drama, without regard to narrrow, sectarian and bigoted views. Wherever the tear of sorrow could be wiped away, the anguished heart be relieved; wherever the down-trodden could be raised up, or the darkened mind be brightened by the rays of knowledge, there, uninfluenced by creeds or sectarianism, her truly Catholic spirit saw the path of duty, clear and distinct, as if the pillar of the cloud was leading her.

Never were her attentions as beautifully exhibited as now to her father and mother. The health of her mother, always delicate, yearly appeared more frail under the exhausting influence of a tropical climate. But the elasticity of spirit so natural to her, and her great desire for the promotion of the happiness of her family, had caused her to conceal, even from the eye of affection, the lassitude which constantly afflicted her. Blanche frequently urged upon her mother to journey north, assuring her that, in its bracing atmosphere, her constitution would be built up with new vigor.

"No, dear Blanche, if I go to New York, it must be by a sea voyage, and I really think I could not bear the sea-sickness, which for three or four weeks I must endure."

"Is there no other way of reaching the North?" inquired Blanche.

"Scarcely any practicable route," replied Mrs. Lefort. "Your

father has given me such horrid accounts of a journey by stage, that I suspect the most vigorous health would scarcely undergo the fatigue."

"It seems hard," said Blanche, "to be imprisoned within such narrow precincts. I wish father had pitched his tent in Carolina. There, within a day's ride of the sea-coast, he would have enjoyed the free mountain air, and have escaped the enervating effect of our long summers."

"Do not be troubled about me, dear Blanche, I have thus far been preserved by a kind, though invisible hand, and we should not distrust His goodness, which has been so signally manifested in our protection. Whatever may be our lot, rest assured that the disposing thereof is by that Providence, whose wisdom and love is infinite."

CHAPTER XXX.

But all the strength of character of Blanche, was now put to the severest test, by the breaking out of an epidemic, which seemed to threaten the destruction of all of every age, rank, and sex. Consternation was pictured upon every visage, and nowhere was the terror so marked and frightful, as in the appealing faces of the horror-stricken slaves. And yet, safety and life depended upon self-possession, and a calm and hopeful disposition.

In that neighborhood, as yet unvisited by any sickness, which had ever been resorted to for the salubrity of its climate, it was not surprising that fear should blanch the countenance of those, who, for the first time, saw the effect of the pestilence, "which walketh in darkness, and the destruction which wasteth at noon-day." Here, Blanche was truly a ministering angel. She visited, without fear or hesitation, the homes of want and suffering, furnishing the necessary medicine; and, more than all, imparting by her sweet smile and words of encouragement, relief against the attack of the dread destroyer.

Never was a more beautiful exhibition of the effect of true religion, and genuine philanthropy witnessed, than was to be seen in some of the cabins of the slaves. A complete panic had driven from their homes, their owners, and their natural protectors, and they were left to battle, as they best could, with this terrible pestilence. Here now again, was seen the calm and placid face of that devoted missionary, who, a few years ago, was rescued from impending death, through the instrumentality of

William Burns. Here, by the couch of the sick and the sorrowing, were found, side by side, Paul Eaton and Blanche Lefort.

Fear had unfitted those, who as yet had escaped, from nursing the sick; but when they saw those angels of mercy in their infected cabins, and listened to their words of comfort and courage, apprehensions were at once dispelled, and the chief danger and difficulty was removed. At all hours, by day and by night, through storm and sunshine, these devoted friends of the afflicted were unwearied in their efforts. But when the icy finger of death had touched its victim, and all would have fled in terror from the swollen and stiffened corse, the presence of Paul Eaton and Blanche seemed to possess a talismanic charm, in rallying the courage, and securing the services, requisite for the performance of the last offices for the dead.

"How is it, Miss Lefort," said Paul Eaton, "that, when most of the daughters of fashion are appalled at these terrible exhibitions of sickness and death, and fly from them upon the wings of fear, that you are found in the loathsome cabin, and at the bedside of death?"

"I have learned, Mr. Eaton," replied Blanche, "that nowhere is happiness or safety so surely found, as in the faithful discharge of duty. Sorrow and disappointment visit, not only the lowly and the humble, but the homes of those, where every comfort and luxury are enjoyed in the greatest profusion."

"Is luxury a source of enjoyment, Miss Lefort?"

"Yes, sir; the luxury of doing good. But this, I know, is a play upon the word, and no answer to your question. The world generally supposes, that upon velvet carpets, and beneath the silken drapery, where wealth reposes, hours glide noiselessly along, freighted with purest delights. I intended merely to say that behind these gorgeous trappings, anguish, in its most hideous form, was ofttimes a visitant."

"*True, indeed,* Miss Lefort, is it that obedience to the high

behests enjoined by our Great Exemplar, alone assures solid and permanent peace. At the couch of the sick and the dying; at the grave, where broken hearts were bending in almost speechless agony, there, His calm, majestic form was seen, and His sweet voice, with healing on its wings, was heard by the afflicted; or, reaching the silent ear of death, at His command, rosy health revisited the wasted cheek, and a new life animated the form which was wearing the habiliments of the grave. Never before have I seen the ravages of pestilence, Miss Lefort, and but for the injunctions of my Master, I should, as others did, I fear, have fled from the awful scene."

"What could we have done without you, Mr. Eaton? This neighborhood, even now, would have been a Golgotha, for fear and apprehension so aggravated disease, that all remedies were fruitless. Thankful am I, that the worst is now passed, that the march of the dread destroyer is stayed."

Notwithstanding the skill and devotion of physicians and friends, scarcely a house but had been visited by this fell disease, clothing each family with the drapery of woe.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The apprehensions of the family of Mr. Lefort were intensely excited by the unwearied and constant exertions of Blanche, wherever this appalling disease was manifesting itself. So virulent had it become, that contact with it was regarded as fatal. The strongest ties of relationship, or of pecuniary interest were disregarded from the terrible apprehensions of those, who might feel themselves to be within the sphere of its influence. Swift destruction marked the footsteps of the invisible enemy, and all sought safety in flight, when he approached their habitations. The old, experienced, and skillful physician, and the professional nurse, who considered themselves proof against attack, were falling by the side of those who had called in their assistance. They whom the morning had awakened to all the enjoyments of high health, ere evening's close, slept the sleep of death. The stoutest hearts were appalled by events so fraught with desolation and woe. Blanche surveyed the whole scene before her, with an unquailing eye, and with an unshaken faith in that Providence, which had so signally protected her and hers, and with an unwavering trust, that the path of duty would prove to be the path of safety, resolved to give her whole time and strength to those who were in want and suffering.

"Oh, Blanche," said her father, "I cannot express how great are our anxieties and fears for your safety, mingling, as you do, by day and by night, with those who are falling victims to this dreadful pestilence. Have you not duties towards your own

family, which would forbid such exposures, as you hourly encounter?"

"We are all, father, safe and well. No one of our family has been attacked, and our house has been guarded, as if by an angel hand, pointing to a sign upon the lintel, and the foot of the destroyer was not permitted to enter our habitation. Are we not, then, called upon to acknowledge this guardian care, and to show our trust and faith, by exhibitions of fearless conduct, wherever and whenever the voice of duty or humanity may call us?"

"But the sphere of woman, dear Blanche, is a limited one. Her education, her habits, the customs, and rules of society unfit her for those positions, which require a masculine strength and courage."

"And yet, father, you will admit that none are so well fitted as woman to render those kind, gentle attentions, so soothing to those, whose strength has been prostrated by disease, and whose courage has fled before a malady that seems to baffle all skill and effort. And how great is her reward. I had rather know, when the warm pulsations of my heart have ceased, that the poor and the disconsolate would stand around my bed, and with flowing eyes, speak of kindness shown, and privations endured, 'shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made,' than to live upon the page of the poet or the novelist as the most attractive woman of the age."

"I feel the force of your remarks, dear Blanche, but though they may affect my head, my heart remains unaffected. I still think you should leave to others the offices you have assumed."

"I have ever, father," replied Blanche, "taken a different view of the duties belonging to our sex. When I have been reading the descriptions of those terrible wars, which have bathed the fields with gore, and the faces of the widow and orphans with scalding tears, I have felt an instinctive wish to have been present to cheer, and aid the wounded, and the suffering warrior. How would the

horrors of the battle-field have been softened down, if the tender and pitying hand of woman could have been stretched forth to lave the parched lips of the smitten, and the dying; or her ear, so inspiring with confidence, could be present to catch the last sigh, or receive the latest wish of him who had fallen, defending the honor or the soil of his country. Surely all rules of society, which should exclude from such scenes, those so formed by nature for their alleviation, must be based in error."

"But society, my daughter, has adopted these rules because it has seen in the brutal habits and dispositions of too many of the sterner sex, a danger most imminent, where your vivid imagination might lead you to suppose, you might be useful."

"I cannot believe in such peril," replied Blanche. "Her mission would inspire her with courage, and her high and holy purpose would insure for her the respectful and decorous treatment of every one. Her self-denying and noble act would furnish her with a panoply, more impervious than that wrought by the cunningest artificer. Her mild eye of love and pity, her soothing words, her angel acts would surround her with an army of friends, 'whose swords would leap from their scabbards, to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.' And more than all, by these arbitrary rules of which you speak, society has deprived our sex of a school in which character would be trained and formed, hearts disciplined, and powers fully developed. We were created to be the help-meets, not the playthings of man, the mere ornaments of his house and home. Have you not seen," continued she, "the true-hearted, the most gifted of our sex, pining beneath some bitter disappointment? dying, because she had naught else to do, but, in the seclusion and monotony of home, to feed upon the sad memories, which were consuming her. Aye, while her heart was well-nigh bursting turned over to her piano, to her needle, or the solitary walk, all so well adapted to enhance the sorrow, which was wasting her, when, in action, engaged in some work that would task all the energies

of her mind and body, she would have regained her cheerfulness and forgotten her griefs."

"Are not these," said her father, "pictures of a glowing fancy? And where do you find examples of such maidenly efforts?"

"I know," rejoined Blanche, "that but few of our sex have won for themselves the golden opinions of the world by acts of disinterested and self-denying benevolence, but there are some, who although their names are not blazoned upon this world's scroll of fame, will find that they are 'written in the book of life' for the unseen and blessed charities, which from their hands have fallen like the dew, upon the poor and deserted children of humanity. How often by the bedside of wretched want, and pining poverty, are seen those Sisters of Charity providing for the necessities, even to the most menial offices, or soothing the last hours, of the sick and the dying, when others of our sex, blessed with the most ample means by the Father of us all, look with stolid indifference and unconcern upon the saddest picture presented by the wretchedness of our fallen race. The world look upon them, I know, as a part of a great enginery, prepared by the Roman Catholic church, but such acts could spring from no sectarian feeling, and no more belong to that church, than does the magnificent old Gothic architecture, the living, breathing pictures of the Madonna, and the crucifixion, or the '*ora pro nobis*,' whose rich, mellow, solemn tones are so deeply entrancing."

The arguments of Blanche were so unanswerable, and the effect upon her mind so soothing that both her father and mother deemed it wisest not to interfere in her favorite pursuits. They rejoiced to see once more upon her face the old smile of happiness, as she related some touching story, and hoped that a new direction would be given to the current of her thoughts, dissipating, as does the sun the mists upon the mountain top, the clouds which had, for so long a time, rested upon her spirits.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Congress had now convened, and Charles Grafton, for the first time, took his place in that body, where wisdom and eloquence, hardly surpassed in any deliberative assembly, presided. Recognizing in his seat, his former friend William Burns, and the husband of the sister of her, whom he had loved with an intensity so strong, he approached him with an ease and dignity, and addressed him with a cordiality most winning in its manner. He inquired particularly for Mrs. Burns, of Mr. and Mrs. Lefort, but made not the most distant allusion to Blanche. Burns could with difficulty lay aside the hauteur he had at first assumed, and the determination to treat with marked coolness, one, whom he thought had trifled with the affections of a person, so dear to himself, as Blanche.

"How unaccountable," said he to himself, "is the manner of Grafton. I will find the key to conduct so dark and so mysterious. How strange that he never spoke of Blanche." Perhaps his conscience tells him, that he has treated her in a manner, unmanly and ungenerous, and his pride would conceal from me his feelings. This session shall not close before I have the clue to behavior so singular, so unnatural."

Many and varied were the important questions discussed, and the expectant friends of Charles Grafton were impatient to witness an exhibition of the powers of their favorite orator, upon this new stage. But with great wisdom, he remained a silent spectator and hearer, where all was new to him, and with great sagacity he

decided, that better to keep alive the strong expectation and desire of those, who had been told of his great abilities as an orator, than to fritter away all interest by speaking upon any and all occasions. He himself, was all eagerness to witness some display of the powers of Burns as a political speaker.

Without any feeling of envy, or actuated by any mean rivalry, he indulged the desire of a fair and friendly encounter with the young member from Lousiana, upon this great arena of public debate. An opportunity was soon offered for the gratification of his wish to hear Burns, in an impromptu speech, in reply to some flippant attack upon Louisiana.

The reply of Burns, if reply it could be termed, for he scarcely noticed the assailant of the State he represented, was calm, manly and dignified. His sarcasm was withering; and when he turned away with a look, in which you could scarcely tell whether pity or contempt predominated in his mind, in a rapid manner, he gave a picture of the resources of his State, of the patriotism of his constituency, of the proud position, she, now among the youngest of the sisters of this great confederacy, had assumed, the house was electrified by the able and eloquent defence of the State he represented.

Grafton was among the first to congratulate him upon his speech, and his whole manner was too warm and hearty to doubt for a moment its sincerity.

In the first glow of excitement, Burns received in the same spirit, as they were tendered by Grafton, his civilities. The frost-work of his natural manner was all melted, and the cordiality of the friendship of years beamed in the expression of his handsome face.

"From the lips of no one, is commendation more grateful to my feelings," said Burns, "than from Mr. Grafton."

"And to no one does it afford more true happiness to offer the meed of praise, when so worthily bestowed, than to myself," said

Grafton. "May I not hope to avail myself of the experience you have already acquired in this hall, and of the respect you have so deservedly won, when I shall be required to flesh my spear with some competitor."

"If fame speaks truth," replied Burns, "you will require no adventitious aid, when you shall afford us the happiness of listening to your voice in debate. But as far as my poor experience or ability may be of any service to you, I need scarcely say, that it will ever be at your command."

The session was now wearing away, and Grafton had as yet been a silent member. Questions growing out of our foreign relations, raised by the celebrated Monroe doctrine, as it was familiarly termed, opened a wide field for discussion, offering an opportunity for the display of talent and information. His early friend and patron, the senator, Mr. S., whose defence he had previously assumed with so much vigor and ability, as our readers will remember, discussed with him, at his rooms, these topics, and was surprised by the breadth of the views, and maturity of the opinions of his young protégé.

"And now, Mr. Grafton," said Mr. S., "promise me that you will give expression to those sentiments, in a speech upon the resolutions now before the House. Believe me, you friends all expect it, your constituents would be chagrined should you remain longer silent, and you would lose a golden opportunity for a display of those abilities, which my age and friendship for you, will permit me to speak of, without subjecting myself to the imputation of flattery."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE conversation with Mr. S. confirmed Grafton in his intention of speaking to the resolution alluded to. He had studied it with the greatest care, and some of the topics, naturally connected with it, had excited in his mind the greatest interest. The occasion for an effort on his part arose sooner than he expected, for in the remarks of some member, the resolution had been tauntingly alluded to, as the embodiment of Virginia metaphysics, and a speech of Senator S. had been criticised with great severity, as full of ingenious subtleties, and as a fit emanation from the Virginia school of politics.

Grafton arose to his feet, his eye kindling as with a living fire, his expressive face lighted up with those meteor flashes of intelligence, and scarcely suppressed emotion, he exclaimed, "Virginia metaphysics!—Virginia politics! In what school of politeness, Mr. Speaker, from what graceful and elegant vocabulary, has the honorable member, who has just taken his seat, acquired the manner or the language, which he has brought into this high debate?" He then alluded gracefully to his native State, and, without intending the slightest disparagement to other members of this great confederacy, he would take leave to refer to him, the author of that wide world renowned State paper, which I now have in my eye, the Declaration of Independence: to him, by whose matchless eloquence the enthusiasm of the colonists had been kindled into a blaze: to him, who had borne our triumphant eagles safely along the red path of war: to him, who had done so

much in building up this magnificent political fabric, beneath whose ample shade, we to-day sit here, in the robes of office. Leaving these topics, he stated with great clearness the propositions to the consideration of which, he would bespeak the generous ear of the House.

He dwelt upon the colonization of these States: the causes, which compelled our fathers to bid a final adieu to home and country, to the hearths and altars, and graves, yet wet with the tears of affection and love, that here, on this side of the Atlantic, they might plant the ensigns, and build up the temple, of freedom. That however, in other lands, despotisms might rear their unsightly heads, and, with their iron heels, crush out the first aspiration of liberty, that here, on this western continent, freedom unfettered as the winds, that float through our forests, pure as those streams, wildly gushing from the mountain side, should ever be the right of the people.

He dwelt upon the wonderful military genius of Bonaparte, which enabled him to batter down fortresses, and subjugate cities, as a mere pastime, that however wide, successful, and desolating might be his march upon the eastern continent, that here would the waves of mad ambition be stayed.

He remarked that no unholy alliance of power and despotism across the seas, would ever be permitted to interfere with forms of government, or domestic relations, established on this great continent, which, in some future and not far distant day, in its widest extent, was to be governed by the descendants of those, who first landed upon the rock-bound coast of New England, or pitched their tents beneath those noble oaks, which, for centuries, had fringed the meadows upon the banks of James River. He then drew a picture of the future of America, as by the practised hand of the most skillful artist, her power, her resources, her lettered glory, her skill in arms, her more glorious conquests in *peace.* "*Now*, sir, we may read her annals, but then, in that bril-

liant future, in that day of her just renown, then, and not till then, let her history be written!"

It is impossible, in this brief epitome, to give but the faintest idea of the maiden speech of Charles Grafton. The enthusiasm, and eloquence of his manner, the wide views, which he presented of the subject, the skill that he brought to bear in fortifying his positions, and the bursts of eloquence, with which he occasionally electrified the House, more than realized the expectations of his friends, and obtained the highest commendations of his whole auditory. Through the crowd of friends and admirers, Burns made his way to the seat of Grafton, and, in glowing words, congratulated him, upon the high success he had won, in the speech just delivered. He assured him, that he had at once taken a high place among the ablest and most eloquent debaters upon the floor of the House, and reminded him, that it would require no small degree of industry and effort, to retain a position, so enviable.

"Will you tell my friends," said Grafton, "if I now have any in Louisiana," and in spite of himself, his eyes were quickly suffused, "that I have done no discredit to a friendship, and partiality, which I had once cherished as the dearest of all possessions."

"Nothing will afford me half the pleasure, Mr. Grafton, of attempting, at least, a report of the effect of your speech, for before I see them, all my friends will have read it in the columns of the Intelligencer."

He was about to speak of one, who would treasure in her heart every sentence and word, but pride came immediately to rescue the remark, and playfully added, "That if rumor was ever to be trusted, among his acquaintances in Virginia, one heart, at least would beat with quicker and warmer pulsations, after this day's effort."

"I have many warm and kind friends," replied Grafton, "in my

native State; if I shall have pleased them, in this new attempt in public life, it will afford me great gratification. With none of the affections of kindred, or the regard of intimate friends, I have few of the incentives of ambition, or the rewards of success."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"How inexplicable to me," said Burns to himself, "are the workings of the mind and heart of Charles Grafton. He appears to me, to be full of the strangest contradiction. A few years since, when I first became acquainted with him in Louisiana, I regarded him, as a generous, noble fellow. He seemed to be perfectly frank and open-hearted, a man of no concealments, elevated and true in all his sentiments. I was all the more struck with these qualities of mind and manners, inasmuch as they were so strikingly in contrast, with the dark, sinister malignancy, which manifested itself in the very look and tone of his brother. While I felt an instinctive abhorrence at all communion with the one, towards the other, I was drawn by the cords of an almost affectionate regard. The defect in the character of Charles, apparent, when I first knew him, was want of purpose, a lack of ambition for distinction, in some walk of life. His existence seemed to be all frittered away. All his time was occupied in attentions upon his sister-in-law, Mrs. Helen Grafton, and upon Blanche, and then again and again, I said to myself, what a pity, that a man with such shining qualities, of such a distinguished air and bearing, so well fitted to make his mark upon the age in which he lives, should suffer the seed-time of life to pass by, without a thought, and without an effort, outside of the common courtesies of every day existence. But now how changed! He appears the very embodiment of an active, excited intellect. His countenance is radiant *with thought.* You may read there, as if written in

legible characters, the workings of a mind which never slumbers, and behold the scintillations of that undying spark, which lights up, with heavenly beauty, our mortal frame-work. And with all this devotion to books, his constant unwearied effort to inform himself upon every subject, his evident great regard to personal appearance, the time he must give to the mere manner of public speaking, all this training of mind and person, is upon some principle beyond my ken. He says he is not actuated by ambition, that he has no particular friends and no relatives, whose approbation or gratification would induce such severe and wasting efforts. I shall give up all further search for motive; he is, to me, a perfect enigma. But I will indulge in no more reflections of this character.

"I will throw them into my letters to Louise, and see if the imagination of woman, so fertile, so skilled in all the mysterious workings of the human heart, can solve this riddle." He added to these thoughts in his letters to his wife, that he did not believe in the reports that Charles was engaged to, or even interested in any lady. He had met him frequently at parties, and though always brilliant and fascinating, a great favorite, courted and caressed by many high-born and courtly dames, who were looking out for desirable alliances for their blooming, blushing daughters, that all his attentions ended with the evening party.

He had seen him with the daughter of Senator S., an elegant and accomplished young lady, and the acknowledged belle of the season, and although it was evident that the father hoped that the acquaintanceship would ripen into a warmer sentiment, and the blushes of the young lady discovered her preferences, that his devotions were only such as are ever offered by gallantry, at the shrine of beauty. How different his manner, his look, his words, from those we were wont to see in our dear old parlor, when his large, expressive eyes seemed to be interpreting the lovely face of our dear Blanche. He described to Louise the speech of Charles,

"But I will not," said he, "mar its beauty, by any analysis of it, as I send it with this letter, for your perusal.

"But to fully enjoy the speech, you should have seen him when he delivered it. His graceful and dignified manner, the elated, manly look as he rose with his theme, the sarcasm which now curled his lip, the irony, which was, at times, playing in his eye, and the prophetic vision, which seemed to possess him, as he spoke of the future of our country, produced a most magical effect upon a crowded audience. When he rose to speak, as it was near the hour, I was about to move the House to adjourn, to give him the floor, for the morrow, an expedient often resorted to by the friends of a speaker, to afford him time, for the preparation of a reply.

"But he evidently saw my intention, and with one of those significant smiles of recognition, spoke his thanks, with the manifest desire of going on. He took up and dwelt upon the last words of the speaker, who had preceded him. He fixed upon him a look of ineffable, withering scorn, as if about to launch upon him the fiercest of Jove's thunderbolts, but he obviously lost sight of him, who had for the moment excited his indignation, as he was holding up before his delighted hearers, the pictures of Washington and Jefferson, of Henry and of Madison.

"In vain should I attempt to give you any idea of the effect of his speech, and I shall wait till I see you, when I hope to be able to give you some more just description of one of the most promising young men of our country."

Congress had now adjourned, and members were scattering for their distant homes.

Grafton has just left the room of Burns.

How anxiously did the hearts of these two noble young men, attracted to each other by similar tastes and pursuits, yearn for the expression of those thoughts, which were shut up by pride and self-esteem.

The one, believing that the feelings of the sister of his wife, endowed with every mental and personal charm, and worthy of all love and admiration, had been trifled with; the other, smarting under a disappointment of those hopes, which he thought Blanche had permitted him to indulge; the resentment of the one, and the pride of the other, prevented the escape of a word, which would have rolled away the stone, that now sepulchred the brightest hopes, the fond anticipations of Blanche Lefort and Charles Grafton.

"Rest assured," said Burns, "I shall give a good account of you to your brother; but he will read in the flattering notices of your *début* in Congress, enough to satisfy the pride of any relative."

"My brother," replied Grafton, "says all these puffs are manufactured to order; he holds them, consequently, in no high estimation. I have sent him my speech, and sure I am, I shall find no severer critic."

"But I hope you will, if possible, induce Mr. Lefort to look upon my effort with a favorable eye, as I have sometimes, foolishly perhaps, thought, that I was regarded in that family, as a good-natured and efficient sort of nobody, without an aim or object in existence."

"You greatly mistake Mr. Lefort, I think," said Burns. "I am sure, that he has ever held you in the highest estimation. He has entertained, with all of us, a feeling of surprise, at your long and continued absence from Louisiana, and at your silence since you left our part of the country."

"What?" exclaimed Grafton—but he abruptly broke off the sentence; for he suspected, at once, that the delicacy of Mr. Lefort had concealed from Burns, the proposal and the rejection, as secrets, which he was not at liberty to disclose—he merely remarked that "he was a poor correspondent, at best, and when he was not assured, that his letters might be desirable, he was unwilling to thrust them upon the notice of any one."

"I shall, I trust, hear from you during our vacation," said Burns. "Were it any other season, than that of summer, I should hope to see you during the term which will intervene, between this and the meeting of our next Congress; but, I suppose, you will have to take a tour among your constituents, as Virginians hold their public servants to a somewhat strict account of their stewardship. And now, Grafton, I will bid you farewell, with the hope that your future career may realize all the promise, which you have given to the country by your first essay in public life."

"I am much obliged to you, Burns, for the compliment. To have succeeded, according to your estimation, is no small praise; but my future has little to cheer and brighten my heart. Constant occupation, my library and pen, afford relief from saddest contemplations. It will give me pleasure, to keep up, by correspondence with you, an intercourse which has, I assure you, been to me, a source of high pleasure."

CHAPTER XXXV.

How strange are the workings of the human mind, how singular the operations of the heart, guided and controlled by mysterious power! And yet upon going back, and examining the early influences, which gave the bias and direction to these wonderful agencies, we perceive that the indulgence of some apparently trifling propensity, has resulted in consequences of the most startling character.

To the traveller, who had seen with careless indifference the melting of the snow flakes upon the mountain top, under the first rays of the morning sun, and heedlessly rambled along its winding, devious paths, plucking here and there a shrub or a flower, as they opened their lips to a midday sun, how great is the surprise and horror, as he stands at the base of this stupendous summit, at the close of day, and hears the roar, and crash, and beholds the awful desolation of the avalanche!

To him who has now become hardened in crime, who has perpetrated acts of cruelty, at the bare mention of which, humanity shudders, and turns pale; guilt once wore a hideous form, and he turned with loathing and horror from exhibitions of suffering and distress. But the taste of sin, like the taste of blood to the tiger, whets the appetite, and our finite nature has scarcely sufficient capacity to satiate the cravings of indulged, unchecked depravity.

Our readers, who have gone along with us in the history of Frank Grafton, have seen an illustration of the principle which we have *alluded to.* His heart is now festering with evil passions, remorse

drives sleep from his pillow, or fills his chamber with pale spectres, and he would, if possible, hide himself from the thoughts of his own dark spirit. He hails with delight, the opportunity which business affords him, of leaving again his dreary, desolate home. Little did he dream of the results of this journey. He left Côte Blanche in high spirits, determined to steep in utter forgetfulness, all the hateful memories, which so poisoned his existence.

He had tried the maddening bowl, and when with boon companions, he sometimes found the Lethean draft, that would, for the time, induce oblivion of the past. "I will again more deeply mingle," said he to himself, "with those throngs of pleasure-seeking fools, and in their wild and boisterous revelries find that excitement, which will drive far from me all gloomy, dark forebodings."

Arriving at New Orleans, the gay city seemed to wear a delightful aspect. All was merriment and bustle. A few hours of the morning were required for the transaction of business: the hours of evening were given up to festivity.

Sauntering along those streets, so foreign in their aspect, and which wear an air of gaiety so alluring, a freedom from all restraint so conspicuous, Grafton felt that elation of feeling, peculiar to New Orleans. "Here," said he to himself, "I am free to indulge the wildest propensity. I am not withheld by any narrow, bigoted, and sectarian views, but all are permitted to seek their own happiness, in the way that their judgment, or passion, or fancy may dictate."

Here no temple spires frown upon the gay votary of pleasure, but beneath the very shadow of the old cathedral, and under the unreproving eye of those who minister at her altars, I may pursue pleasure, in her wildest revels, to her hidden and most secret retreats. Here, in a little cabaret, looking out upon the *place d'armes*, a large and beautiful public square, upon the broad, majestic Mississippi, might be seen some half dozen old Creoles around a table, intent upon a game of dominoes, while

across the street, stood a palatial coffee-house, gaudy in its architecture, and most sumptuously furnished with all that could tempt the lover of dissipation. Here were coteries of business men, in various converse, and not disdaining to enliven their racy speech, with the generous *eau de vie;* at another table was a knot of wily politicians, instructing a gaping crowd, and securing their suffrages, by frequent appliances of gin toddies; while at the bar were a crowd of gay young men, instantly engaging the services of waiters in preparing juleps and cocktails. It was a scene of wild revelry, and such as was hourly exhibited in that pleasure-loving city.

Men from all classes of society, freely mingled in the scenes of revelry and dissipation. At the cock-pit, at the gaming table, upon the race course, persons of all professions and callings, were seen, eagerly intent upon the sport before them, and wagering thousands upon the throw of a card, upon the strength of a chicken, or upon the fleetness of some favorite courser. Life was one great gala-day, present amusement and excitement the chief object of existence.

Here were men from all nations. As if by common consent, the ordinary restraints which in the other cities of the country men imposed upon themselves, were here thrown off. And though courts were organized, they had little to do, but to deal with the petty offences of the low and degraded; men in the higher ranks of life defended their own lives and honors from any and all assailants.

The ball room, which to-night was brilliant with the beauty and fashion of that metropolis, which echoed with unrivalled music, to-morrow was the chosen spot, where some young Creoles were engaged, according to custom, with small swords, to punish some real or fancied breach of etiquette. Fascinating to the heated imagination of Grafton were such scenes, and such a society. Here he could drown all recollections which might mar his happiness.

Here he could find associates who would laugh at the bare mention of accountability, who recognize no authority superior to their own decisions and opinions. Here the gay goddess of pleasure opened wide her temple gates, inviting her delighted votaries by strains of delicious music, to enter, and taste the bliss which she had provided. Here was an apartment furnished with all those luxurious delicacies and decorations which could gratify the taste, or minister to the desires of the voluptuous epicurean. There was the chamber where were spread the tables so delightful to the eye of the bloated Bacchanal.

With what new delight did the care-worn, wretched Grafton, enter the portals of this fascinating edifice. Oh! had the veil of the future been but for a moment uplifted, he would have seen that this "house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

From one scene of gaiety to another, Grafton resorted, as if determined to fill up every moment with enjoyment. He tasted each pleasure, till it palled upon the sense, and then hurried to new sources of gratification. Wearied at last in seeking happiness by himself, flushed with the fragrant wines, which are provided by those who lure to their retreats the victims of play, he was about to leave his rooms at the hotel, but he happened to meet at the door some gentleman, to whom he had been introduced, who at once accosted him.

"What, Mr. Grafton, so early leave the abodes of pleasure? Surely you are not now on your way to your dull, solitary room. Night in our gay city is the time for enjoyment, the damp, dreary hours of the morning, the opportunity for sleep and refreshment. Come, my dear sir, join us in a game of cards, and at a suitable hour, we will accompany you to your hotel."

The remembrances of such a scene were vivid upon his memory, and the presence of some of the persons, who had once participated with *him in it*, for a moment blanched the face of the reck-

less Grafton, but the intoxicating drafts, which he had been quaffing, were maddening his brain, and fearful that he would be stigmatized with cowardice, he accepted the invitation.

"But before we sit down to cards," said Mr. Morven, "let us partake of those delicious viands, which our friend Prados has so bountifully provided for his friends and patrons."

"How sparkling, how delicious is your champagne, Mr. Prados," said Grafton. "You must be an especial favorite of some vintner of the sunny isle—perhaps he has sat down to your unrivalled suppers, and seeks, in this way, to discharge the obligation."

"You are complimentary, Mr. Grafton. These wines," continued Prados, "do well enough to wash down a cut from the breast of a canvas-back duck, or from a haunch of venison, but I have a bottle of old Madeira, which connoisseurs pronounce unequalled for richness and delicacy of flavor. Pray do me the honor of tasting it, and tell us if it is equal to the old wines, a bottle of which, I am told, is, at each dinner, belted away by aristocratic Virginians."

"It does not require the certificate of any person," said Grafton, "to establish its claim to excellence. It bears its true stamp on its own beaded face. If Virginians drink wine like this, it is easy to account for their generosity, if, as it is said, good wine makes good fellows."

The supper and the wines having been fully discussed, the gentlemen retired to a room, furnished in the most costly and luxurious manner, and the wines which had so delighted the palate of Grafton, abounded upon the handsome side-board.

"Well, what shall our game be, Mr. Grafton?" said Morven.

"Brag has more of excitement about it," replied Grafton, "but as my crop is somewhat unpromising, I hope you will limit the game, and not send me home, from the table, with hardly money *enough to buy* ploughs and mules for my plantation."

With some other laughing remarks, the party began their game.

A lurking devil might-have been seen in the malignant sneer, which sometimes played across the dark features of young Lavasseur, as he exchanged a somewhat knowing wink, with one or two Creoles, who were overlooking the game.

The wine cup went busily round, which with the excitement of high play, occasionally aroused the stormy passions of the gamesters.

Grafton had interposed more than once, to quiet an incipient quarrel, between Morven and Lavasseur, when all drank full bumpers to drown any hard feeling, and again the play was resumed; most extravagant was the betting, and the interest of all was raised to the highest pitch. Again, a dispute arose between some one and Lavasseur, high and angry words were exchanged, when, once more with some asperity of manner, Grafton interfered.

"You seem inclined, Mr. Lavasseur," said Grafton, "to be quarrelsome to night; some little coolness and candor on your part, would convince you, that you are now, as you have been twice before, in the wrong. These ebullitions of temper are becoming to me, at least, somewhat distasteful."

"You have several times before, sir," said Lavasseur, addressing Grafton, "meddled officiously and offensively in what does not concern you. I neither desire your advice, nor will I submit to your impertinence."

"I shall not bandy words with you, sir," said Grafton. "He who has any pretensions to the character of a gentleman will not resort to bullying and braggadocio to sustain himself, when he finds himself in the wrong. True courage fears not to apologize, when right requires an acknowledgment."

"And cowardice frequently assumes high sounding phrase," said Lavasseur, "for purposes of concealment. Your reputation

is too well established in this community, Mr. Grafton, to allow you, to set yourself up, as a censor, for the correction of the manners, and morals of gentlemen.

When you shall have satisfactorily replied to a touching tale of wrong and suffering, related some time since, in our public prints, then it may become you to lecture those, with whom you may be associated."

"To what does your insolent remark refer?" said Grafton.

"I think sir," said Lavasseur, the heroine or heroines of the tale were Emma, and"——

At the mention of this name, Grafton sprung, with the ferocity of a tiger, at the throat of his adversary, but with the rapidity of thought, Lavasseur, who expected, and was well prepared for the attack, drew from his bosom a dagger, and with a single thrust, sent it home to the heart of his assailant. "Perish, murderer of my cousin! Lapere, you are at last avenged!"

With a look of intensest agony, as if the memories of years were crowded in these moments of expiring nature, he gazed upon those around him, as if for relief from the dying pangs, and in a moment more, fell lifeless into the arms of Morven!

Despair was written in clear and legible characters, upon the distorted visage of Frank Grafton!

With almost indecent haste, and in silence, his cold remains were borne to the potter's field. No tear was shed at his grave, no sorrowing friend was present at his funeral obsequies!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

We must now take our readers to another chamber, where the awful form of death was approaching, with such noiseless steps, that even affection itself, was calm and unterrified.

The heart of Blanche seemed to have been preparing, by trials, and by scenes of deep distress, for the coming of an event, which required all the fortitude of the strongest nature. Her love for her mother, had never known limit or abatement. To but one heart, had she ever revealed the sad story of wounded affection, maternal love and tenderness had softened the blow which had struck down the hopes and happiness, that had brightened the springtime of existence. To that ear of love, the shrinking delicacy, which trembled at an allusion, even, to the cause of hidden sorrow, fearlessly whispered the secret of her soul, and the disclosure brought soothing and peace.

And now, by a beautiful provision of Nature, the stem, which was breaking beneath the pressure of years and disease, was to receive support from the branch, to which it had imparted its strength and aliment. So gradually had the constitution of Mrs. Lefort given way, so hopeful and uncomplaining was she ever, that her husband and children had never, for a moment, considered her in danger.

But now the awful truth stared them in the face, that a rapid decline would soon take from them, this idolized object of their affections.

"I have, for some time, felt, dear Blanche, that my days upon

earth were numbered; and yet I could not bear to afflict your heart, already bleeding, by telling you of my apprehensions. But, I am sure, we shall not long be separated.

"So firm is my faith in the Word of life, that the passage from earth to heaven, seems but a step, and all our desire should be, submission to the will of our heavenly Father."

"Dearest mother, how I wish I could journey with you to the abodes of the blessed. I have seen death, in all its forms, during the prevalence of that terrible epidemic, which so lately visited us; and so often has the messenger come clothed in bright array, and with words of hope, that now all which strikes me with dread and sorrow, is separation."

"Dreaming last night, dear Blanche! and yet was it a dream! for the vision is even now so distinct, the impression so vivid before my mind.

"I saw a home prepared for us all, in a place lovely beyond all description. Ambrosial bowers, lighted up by soft, unfading rays, were ours. Music, sweeter than the breathings of the lute, and gentle zephyrs, floating over floral beds, filled the air with angelic harmonies, and delicious fragrancy.

"Fear and fatigue were banished thence. No night was there. Hunger and distress were unknown in that peaceful habitation. Was it not a realization of the sweet promise? 'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you.'"

Day after day passed away, bringing nearer and nearer to her last home, the patient, resigned, and happy wife and mother. It seemed to be her office to soothe and relieve, by words of comfort and hope.

The daily calls of the physician, were more a matter of ceremony and kindness, than for the purpose of administering medicine; for he had, some days since, been compelled to announce to the anguished husband, that her disease was beyond

all human skill, that he only hoped to palliate the sufferings which she would, perhaps, endure.

With the sweetest smile, would she repay the delicate, sleepless attentions of her devoted husband; and to any word of repining, she would tell him, "How happy had been their lives; how much have we to be thankful for, and how sweet to you will be the recollections, that during our many years of married life, my happiness has been your chiefest study.

"And we are permitted to die in peace, while my dear sister and mother perished upon the block, under the cruel, unjust sentence of wicked, bloody-minded men. Ours, too, are the consolations of unwavering faith."

During the sickness of Mrs. Lefort, she was visited by Paul Eaton. He had studied little else than his Bible, and the beautiful hymns of Wesley. There was a simplicity and single-heartedness about him, without the slightest tinge of cant or bigotry that gave a peculiar charm to his society. All asperity was so softened down by that "charity which hopeth all things and is kind;" a faith so clear, so steadfast, so realized, that his communings seemed those of an inhabitant of some brighter sphere. You perceived, at once, in his manner, how truly and implicitly he obeyed the injunction, "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on." In neat and simple attire, he went about, visiting alike the abodes of wealth and poverty, and with words of kindness and peace, solaced the hearts of sorrow and distress.

"I came," said Eaton, on one of his visits to Mrs. Lefort, "to acquire for my own heart, peace and strength, more than with any expectation of imparting it to you, Mrs. Lefort."

"I am always," said Mrs. Lefort, "most happy to see you. My faith is strengthened, my hopes brightened, by the delightful views you ever hold up of Christian experience. You yourself

have been called to pass through fiery trials, and well know the true sources of relief and consolation."

"My troubles have all been light indeed, when compared with those who have been compelled to drink the bitter cup," said Eaton. "At times, persecution seemed preparing for me the crown of martyrdom, but the power of the Highest, was put forth and scattered my enemies."

"Were you not afraid, said Mrs. Lefort, of the wily arts, and desperate cunning of the Jesuit priest, who had determined upon your destruction?"

"Somewhat, Mrs. Lefort, but I fear a relation of these old troubles will weary you. They all eventuated for good."

"It is cheering to me, Mr. Eaton, to hear of the deliverance of those, who have trusted in a stronger, than an arm of flesh."

"Oh, Mrs. Lefort, I never weary in speaking of the goodness of my Deliverer. I confess, so hedged up was my way by the cunning, crafty conduct of Justiniani, and by the wickedness of Bennet, that I saw no chance for escape. It was indeed a severe trial of my faith, just such an one as I needed. My heart was failing me, for I feared that the machinations of the 'man of sin,' for the ovethrow of the true faith here, would be successful.

"The great learning, the deep knowledge of the human heart, possessed by this priest—to the ignorant and the timid, assuring them of their safety in absolution, to the more intelligent and sincere, referring them to the pure and beautiful morality and character of Fenelon. And then the religious rites, so imposing, all addressed to the eye and the ear, music and painting lending their powerful influence, to awaken and hold, as if spell-bound, the sensibilities of our nature, were all but irresistible. And, added to this was the effort of the dram-selling of Bennet, so brutalizing. Under all these discouragements, I was yielding to despair, and about to abandon this loveliest spot, when by a way unknown to

me, I was taught the sin of supposing, that by my arm, or my strength, were these influences to be destroyed."

"The manifestation of the finger of Heaven, was clear in your deliverance, said Mrs. Lefort, and in the removal of the hindrances to the cause of virtue and morality."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

After the conversation mentioned in the foregoing chapter, Mrs. Lefort seemed to amend. Oh, how does nature rally all her forces to contend against its last enemy! Mrs. Lefort now appeared unusually animated, her voice seemed stronger, the bright smile played around her handsome features, the hectic glow warming into fresh life the cheek, which but now, had put on the marble paleness of swift coming dissolution. The singing of the birds, and the beauty of the blooming flowers, as they threw open the casement, delighted her.

Was it a foretaste of coming bliss, a prevision of amaranthine bowers, vouchsafed to the spirit, yet lingering upon the confines of its celestial home?

"Hold me a little longer on the brink," she would seem to say, as her foot was touching the dark, cold waters! Oh, how would the eye of hope beam with a new rapture, the tear of sorrow giving place to the tear of joy, at these deceptive indications of recovery! The hours of the day were swiftly passing, the strong arm of affection and love had no power to stay them, and at evening's close, the agonized heart should hear those icy words of bereavement, "it is all over!" Unmistakable as appeared to the disinterested eye, the indications, that near at hand was the hour of departure of the wife, so highly prized—the mother, so dearly loved—to the husband and the daughters, there was still a hope, that she might be rescued from the power of the grave. She was all *too precious* to their hearts. They would conceal their darkest

apprehensions in redoubled offices of affection, and cling with a firmer tenacity, to the bright form, now instinct with life and loveliness.

"How melancholy, and yet how surpassingly interesting is the chamber, in which remains the spirit, about to be released from its clayey tenement! The noiseless step, the half suppressed sigh, the last kind offices of affection, the sorrowing faces, all tell the frightful apprehensions, which must be voiceless."

With trembling accent, Mrs. Lefort said, "Raise me a little, husband, that I may look out, once more upon the lawn, for with parting day, the sun of my life will have set for ever. How beautiful are the flowers! He made them, and the sweet songs of the birds—all are vocal with His praise!—Oh, it seems to me I hear the whispers, that come from the heavenly plains! 'Sister spirit, come away!' Don't you hear the rich notes from those harps of gold! I see a bright throng, they are wearing their starry crowns! Oh, listen to that song,—'To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood!' Bright—Beautiful—Heaven!"

A placid, angelic smile lighted up, with a heavenly beauty, the face of the dying wife and mother. Her breathings were so hushed and still, that the heart-broken attendants about her bed, told by their sobbings, their fears, that she was gone.

A moment more, she opened wide her large, blue eyes, expressive of wonder and affection, as if permitted once again to look upon those she had loved so well, and then the light of life faded from those half-closed orbs! And that form, but yesterday so comely, "in the grace of the fashion of it," now took on the rigidity of death. So calm, so peaceful had been the departure, that you would fain look away from the cold vacant casket before you, assured that the jewel was not lost, but yet glistened with new beauty and brilliancy, in the crown of Him, who had made that bed of death a chariot, to convey the now spiritual and glorified body to the climes of complete, unending fruition!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Who can tell, save those who have felt it, the desolation which presides in that home, when one of the honored heads lies low and still, wrapped in the dread drapery of death! The first noisy ebullition of feeling is over, the floods of tears are for the moment dried, and crowding together, as if to fill up the place made vacant around that now desolate hearthstone, with folded hands and downcast eyes, they sit, mute pictures of consuming grief! The sweet prattle, the merry laugh of childhood once so cheering and joyous, now grates upon wounded hearts, and the artless inquiry of little Willie, if grandmother is in heaven, opens afresh the lacerated hearts of the sorrowing survivors.

Blanche, once the fragile, delicate flower, the earliest to demand, and receive the warm caress, first in the thought of parental love, if danger threatened, or trouble lowered, because the least able to endure the shock, now seemed most competent, from her fortitude and composure, to lead these stricken ones away from the grave of buried love, and to direct their thoughts to the only refuge for the sorrowing and heavy laden.

"Father," said Blanche, "never did I, as now, feel the absolute want of your society and love. Will we not, all the better, cherish the memory of my dear sainted mother, by making the home she once loved so well, always happy and cheerful."

"I know, dear Blanche, that it is wrong, and worse than useless, to yield to the heavy blow which has fallen upon our house. For your sake I will try and be cheerful."

"Not for my sake only, dear father. Your own heart must be comforted, your own spirit cheered. Otherwise, how always dark and desolate will be your chamber, when you are alone, with your own thoughts, and your heart would cherish the most gloomy and sad reflections."

"This, dear Blanche, is the bitterest drop in the cup, I must drink of. When with you and Louise, and William, and the children, I feel that I have still great blessings left me, and am soothed by their society. But when I go to her room, I then feel the extent of that loss, which has laid low all hopes of happiness."

"I on the contrary, dear father, am never so cheerful as when in the room she so lately occupied. I love to see her chair placed by the table, near the window she loved so well, her beautiful work-box, so neatly, so conveniently furnished, all open as she left it, her Bible, so precious to her heart, so frequent in her hand, that beautiful picture which she admired so much, 'Christ stilling the storm.' I seem here to feel her presence and enjoy communion with her happy spirit."

"I know, Blanche, that this is true philosophy, the philosophy of the Bible; but imagination utterly fails to bring relief for the great and terrible loss, which ever afflicts me. Time, the great healer, alone can mitigate my grief, or soften the blow that has so deeply wounded me. Daily will we pursue, and cheerfully as possible, the same avocations which occupied us when your mother was with us.

"I must live in the children of William and Louise. I cannot tell you with what pleasure I watch the unfoldings of the beauty of little Marie, the namesake of her grandmother, whom she so greatly resembles, and by whose graceful movement and gesture, I am often most strikingly reminded of her, whom we this day mourn."

The conversations with his daughter had most happily influenced the mind of Lefort, inducing him to shake off the melan-

choly, which was preying upon his heart. He saw how imperiously he was called upon, by the love that he bore to Blanche, now that the confidant of her heart, her guide, her best and strongest friend, had been taken away, to make up, as far as possible, the loss to her, so great, so irretrievable.

He was not fully, but had been made partially acquainted with the dire disappointment Blanche had suffered, in the continued absence of Charles Grafton. He had seen himself, and with approval, the devoted attentions of Charles, before he left; he had noticed the bright happy smile, which was ever upon the face of Blanche, when in the presence of him, whom he regarded somewhat in the light of the lover of his daughter. He had heard the defences she sometimes ventured upon, when Charles was assailed, and readily guessed at the cause of so much warmth and spirit.

It had neither escaped the eye of her father, with what intense anxiety, she had waited the slow passage of long and weary months, in the vain expectation of some tidings, some token of remembrance from him, who had awakened the first dream of love, in that young and happy heart. Little did he imagine that the kind and affectionate messages, which had been transmitted in the letters from Charles to the brother, had all been suppressed, and that by the most artful insinuations, Charles was persuaded, if possible, to believe that Blanche had quite forgotten him, and a gay, volatile, coquettish young creature, was accepting the attentions of various lovers. Mr. Lefort had seen, with dismay, the great change, that was going on, in the disposition of the daughter, so dear to his heart; saw in her averted look, the half-suppressed sigh, the occasional abstraction, that she was the victim of corroding disappointment.

Mrs. Lefort, without violating the confidence reposed in her by Blanche, when she found that her husband had discovered the state of her mind, had felt the necessity of conversing with him upon the subject, for the double reason of inducing him to do all

in his power to divert her, and to put him on his guard, lest he should, by some thoughtless remark, wound her highly excited sensibilities.

He appreciated the great delicacy, and difficulty of his position, and while the pride of his own heart would have dictated one course, the deep love he entertained for his daughter, and the great apprehension felt in regard to her welfare, counselled prudence, and the utmost caution. His unwearied efforts to lead her naturally enthusiastic and strong mind to some pursuit, which would so fully occupy it, that if it did not succeed in producing forgetfulness, on her part, of one, whom he thought had proved himself by his faithless conduct, so unworthy of her, had been in a great measure successful, in bringing back peace to her disquieted bosom.

She had learned the blessedness of doing good. In soothing the sorrows, and alleviating the anguish of otners, in taxing all the resources of her ingenuity to find some relief from a despair, which might be brooding over the bereaved and desolate heart, she was, without perceiving it, warding off the dart, which would have pierced and poisoned her own bosom. Who can tell the gratification, which came home to the heart of her father, when he saw the change, which was wrought in the feeling of one, upon whom he doated with such fondness, and for whom he felt such tender solicitude? And now, that a new source of sorrow, so overwhelming, had been opened for Blanche, Lefort reflected, that duty and love required of him, to manifest that cheerful resignation, which she had counselled, which was alike the dictate of religion, and sound philosophy.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Little did I dream that it would ever fall to my lot, to be the bearer of the intelligence of the horrid death of Frank Grafton. I had supposed that in some unexpected hour of his mad career, his existence would terminate. His overbearing disposition, his insolent manner, and his readiness for a quarrel, would place his life in imminent peril, in a city like New Orleans. And from the accounts I had of the duel of his with Lapere, he seemed to be indifferent as to his fate, or to suppose that he bore a charmed life. It is said, that upon the field, he behaved with such perfect coolness, such chivalrous courage, that unless his antagonist should kill him upon the first fire, his life would not be worth a button. It was known that Grafton was perfect master of his weapon, and being calm and collected, he would shoot with the same accuracy and precision, as if directing his gun at the head of a squirrel."

"What did you say, husband, in your letter to his brother? With your feelings toward Frank Grafton, your abhorrence of his character, I think your truthfulness and sincerity must have been put to the severest test in your communication."

"I told him," said Burns, "the simple truth. I wrote him all the particulars, as far as I knew them, of the death of Frank Grafton. I informed him, that upon hearing the terrible news, I immediately went to New Orleans, and inquired of his merchants all the facts of the case. They said it was one of those unfortunate occurrences, alas! too frequent in the city. That Mr. Grafton

had dined with them that day, and never had appeared in happier mood, or more cheerful in his disposition. They remarked they had done all in their power to ferret out the matter, but that it was of little avail; that the affair occurred in one of the fashionable saloons, devoted to games of hazard, and that it was evident Mr. Grafton had no friends present, for they were all ready to testify that young Lavasseur, who killed him, acted entirely on the defensive, and that he only used his weapon, when we all saw, said they, that his life was in imminent peril. We felt assured, they added, that a public prosecution would result in no good; that the only effect would be to make the affair widely notorious, and, that on a public trial, disclosures in regard to the character of Mr. Grafton would be made, which would be exceedingly unpleasant to the friends of the deceased. Further, that the accused, from their standing and wealth, would find no difficulty in obtaining an acquittal. I wrote him that I would do whatever he might desire, though from any knowledge of all the circumstances, I would advise that the matter should rest where it was. I informed him, that I had placed a most trusty manager at Côte Blanche, that the slaves were all so docile, so remarkably intelligent, and so well understood the plans and purposes of his late brother, that he might give himself no uneasiness in regard to his interests here. And further, that if he should not find it convenient to come out to Louisiana, and would send me the necessary authority, I would go to New Orleans, and make full settlement, and obtain all information in regard to his estate. That from the great system in his business, I had no doubt, his brother left all his affairs in such train, that there would be no difficulty in the final adjustment of them; the more particularly as his merchants were men of the highest standing for probity, and fair and correct dealing. And now, wife, what say you to my account of this most unpleasant occurrence? Toward Frank Grafton I never felt any hostility. I

had a very high respect for the great talents, with which he was endowed, and bitterly lamented that they should have been so prostituted. He died as I feared he would. I apprehended that he might commit suicide. I conversed with Morven, who was present at his death, and he said he had seen many men die upon the field, and in affrays, but that no event had produced such an effect upon his mind, left such a lasting trace upon his memory, as the death of Grafton. He remarked that no tongue could describe the anguish and horror depicted upon the face of the dying man; it was not fear, it was not dread; 'the only word I heard from his lips was:—Memory—and he fell dead in my arms. The event produced the stillness of the grave, not a word was spoken; no reproaches, and in speechless horror, we sought the proper officers, and he was buried out of our sight.'"

"I had hoped," said Mrs. Burns, "that he would have amended and that upon repentance he might have died in peace."

"All things are possible," said Burns, "but still you could hardly have expected it. A man possessed of his proud bearing, so highly endowed, so intelligent, and who had apparently, from the severest wantonness, committed acts of unheard of barbarity, who had too defied all restraints of society, or morality, who seemed to be steeped in crime, and who sought alleviation for his wounded conscience in every licentious indulgence, and when with this, there was associated a hauteur of manner, and a pride of heart almost unequalled, there seems to be no means of reaching such a man by any influence. I have never before spoken of it, but I have for sometime suspected, that he was the cause of the conduct of Charles Grafton toward Blanche. It is unaccountable upon any other hypothesis, for no man can see, and become acquainted with Charles, without feeling an assurance that he is the very soul of honor, and most magnanimous in all the actions of his life. He has been wonderfully successful in his political career, is caressed and flattered, by the first men of the nation,

must know that he is one of the most talented and eloquent young members in Congress, and withal he is evidently a disappointed man. Even when I was congratulating him upon his most fortunate *dêbût*, and told him of the pleasure it would afford his friends, he replied, with a sigh, that he felt himself alone in the world, and when he asked me to report him favorably to your father, his eyes filled with tears, and he could scarcely restrain his emotions. I had a great mind to mention the name of Blanche, but pride would not permit me."

"Why did you not, husband? I would have asked him of the reports I had heard of his engagement. It would have been so natural. I am surprised that you did not."

"I ought perhaps to have done so," said Burns, "and yet would it not have been delicate on my part? He had made no declaration to Blanche, he had never given me reason to know, that he was particularly interested in her. I might have placed myself in a most awkward, and embarrassing position, had I given him cause to suspect, that Blanche or the family had been disappointed by his apparent neglect of her. Had he offered himself to her when in Louisiana, so unsettled were apparently his plans and purposes in life, that, much as I then liked him, I should have thought it a most imprudent match. Believe me, it will yet turn out that, in some way, Blanche has been the cause of his great devotion to political life, and we shall hereafter learn it from his lips."

"If he should come to Louisiana," said Mrs. Burns, "as I think he must now, the acquaintance may be renewed. But Blanche is so changed in character, and seems devoted to father, and she has so much pride in her composition, that the fine person, the wealth or the honors of Charles Grafton would have little chance in winning back the affection which has been slighted. It was her first passion. I greatly feared it would destroy her. And had not father and mother, by a most admirable tact and wisdom,

directed her thoughts to other objects, which, necessarily, took a deep hold upon her feelings and interest, and had they not been unwearied in their devotion to her, I really think the great disappointment would have been fatal to her. And yet with all her love for me, and our great and life-long intimacy, she never hinted to me, that she felt in Charles Grafton any other interest or regard than that of a warm friendship."

"If it can be avoided," responded Burns, "I do not believe Charles will come to Louisiana, he will not certainly this year. As Congress sits in December, he will hardly be able to do so, and he would have no time to accomplish anything. This news will be a most sad blow for him. He was greatly attached to his brother, and such a death will be distressing, indeed, to one whose sensibilities are so refined and delicate."

CHAPTER XL.

Charles Grafton had now received, with the mournful intelligence of his brother's death, a full account of his affairs. Gloomy indeed were his reflections, bitter the thoughts that filled his mind, as these melancholy mementoes lay before his eye "With all his faults, Frank had some most noble, redeeming traits of character," said Charles to himself. "By nature endowed with strong, ungovernable passions, with talents of the highest order, a self-relying, proud spirit, how vital to his own, and the well being of society, that correct and virtuous principles should have been instilled into his mind, while it was plastic, and open to lasting impressions. He started upon his career in a most dangerous era. The startling and brilliant, yet most false ideas, that sprung from the men and times of the French revolution, had here, as elsewhere, a most pernicious influence. Jefferson, the idol of Virginia, had just returned from France, where his own bright intellect had been poisoned and corroded by that mad and wild infidelity, which would there dethrone the Almighty, and set up in His place a senseless beauty, a golden calf, as a proper object of human adoration. From his fascinating pen flowed these graceful essays, which so fatally undermined all true and noble principles. My poor brother ate the tempting fruit of that Upas tree, and its deleterious, deadly influence, may now be seen in his early and dishonored grave. I would have remained with him in Louisiana, but I felt that over him I possessed no influence, and deemed it more safe to trust him to his own reflections, hoping, that time and thought

would bring about a change in his ideas, and make him yet a useful and honored member of society.

From policy, or principle, it was evident the management of the slaves on the plantation had been kind and liberal, and if there was no particular attachment between master and slave, it was clear that they all regarded him as eminently just. Nothing would tempt him to sell one, and from the manuscripts which were found, it appeared that he maintained a strict government with them in all the relations of life. He promoted marriage on the plantation, and a solemn form was given to the contract, and he punished a disregard of the vows, mutually assumed. Each slave was permitted to earn money for himself, by accomplishing more than the task which was given him, and when they were not pressed at a particular season in the crop, they could find, readily and often, a half day, in which they could make money for themselves, as all the necessaries of life were abundantly supplied by their master. With each of them he kept a strict account, and the memoranda left by him, showed precisely what each was entitled to. He left a will, written not long after the departure of Charles, giving him the bulk of his property, and, although he said in it, he had no doubt, from the generous nature of his brother, he need hardly speak of it, he should request that the slaves should not be sold, that they were most of them old family negroes, had been faithful, and industrious, and under his guidance, had been instrumental in amassing a handsome property. He should leave them to his brother, in the fullest confidence that they would ever be kindly cared for.

"Your wishes," said Charles to himself, "shall be fully complied with. These slaves have earned, and are well entitled to their freedom. But they are not as yet fitted for it. They are good farmers, some of them are excellent mechanics, and all of them have those habits of industry, which under proper directions, will give them a handsome support. Fortunate am I, that my brother has left me *the means of* forming so exact an estimate of the value of the plan-

tation at Côte Blanche, for I dread the bare idea of again beholding a place, which to me is so full of the most melancholy recollections. I little dreamed that I might ever, or at least so soon, have occasion to entertain the proposition made me by Mr. Stevenson, to purchase this property, and fortunate am I, that he does not make it a *sine qua non*, to take also the slaves, as he has as many as he can profitably employ of his own. The first proper opportunity which offers, I will see Mr. Stevenson, and if he still is desirous of making the purchase, the place shall be his. I will make such arrangements for the slaves, as, while it shall not impoverish me, shall make them all comfortable and happy. I have had their time and services, I can best repay them, by giving them mine in return, so far as it shall be necessary and useful for their interest."

CHAPTER XLI.

It was not long after the events recorded in the foregoing chapter, that Mr. Stevenson called upon Charles Grafton. "He had heard the sad news of the death," he remarked to Mr. Grafton, "of his brother, and called for the purpose of expressing the deep sympathy he entertained for him in this event, so truly to be deplored. I shall ever remember the kindness and hospitality of your brother. It was that whole-souled, generous conduct which stamped him a real Virginian. With the whole charge of that large property upon his hands, he gave himself up entirely to my disposal. He had but few directions to give to a confidential slave, named Othello, and then he was ready for any amusement or recreation. With his yacht upon the Bay, or with the horses in the neighboring country, he would go with me as I pleased. I know not when I have had so delightful a visit, and his many acts of kindness have endeared to me his memory."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Stevenson, for these expressions of interest in my poor brother. His life has been a sad one, separated, as he has been, from early friends and associations. But he thought it greatly to our mutual interest to remain in Louisiana, as he said, he could there realize so large an income from his investment. I wish, with all my heart, that he had been contented with smaller means, and had come back to his native State."

"I suppose you will yourself, as soon as you can conveniently, remove to Côte Blanche. You will find it a most delightful resi-

dence, and everything goes on there now with such perfect system, you will have little trouble in taking charge of the property."

"No, Mr. Stevenson, I do not expect, or wish, to again abandon Virginia. I am greatly attached to it from early associations, and the generous friendship which has been extended to me, has bound me strongly and indissolubly to a people, to whom I feel myself under such large obligations. I shall offer the plantation for sale with all the movable property, and the slaves I shall remove to this State. You once expressed a wish to buy; if it is still your desire, I will sell to you at a bargain."

"Your brother, with that frankness peculiar to him, once entered into a minute valuation of Côte Blanche, and I would then gladly have taken it at his estimation," said Stevenson.

"I have it, I presume," said Grafton, "in the memoranda sent me."

"Yes," rejoined Stevenson, "these are the very calculations he made, when I was in Louisiana. I will still willingly take it at that price, but upon one condition. I wish my slaves to understand the system, upon which the property has been managed, and I must have Othello for a year, as my principal supervisor. I will pay him five hundred dollars, as a salary."

"I will consent to this," said Grafton, "with the understanding that he has no objection; for hereafter my slaves are to work for themselves, under my direction. I will appoint my friend, William Burns, my agent, who will act for me and complete the sale upon the terms we have agreed upon. And from this time, you will consider Côte Blanche as yours."

"I feel greatly relieved," said Grafton to himself, upon the departure of Mr. Stevenson, "with the arrangement I have made. The remains of Helen, and Emma, and my brother, shall all be removed to our old burial-place, where quietly sleep my father and mother. How gladly will I carry out the plans I have

adopted with the slaves. I will purchase for those who are farmers, sufficient land, and put up comfortable houses, and will charge this to each man. The mechanics I will set up in business, furnishing them the necessary capital. With each, I will keep an exact account, and the income from their labor, shall be appropriated to discharge the debt. The arrangement shall be kept a secret from them, as far as may be, until, by their conduct, it shall appear most advisable to reveal to them my plans. All of them shall be at once manumitted, to prevent a failure of my intention in the event of my death. I shall still have a competency for all my wants in the remaining property in Louisiana. The course of conduct adopted by my brother, in the severe training of the slaves, will, in the end, greatly redound to their good. They are industrious and intelligent, and have been taught the necessity of honesty and good conduct, for the promotion of their present happiness."

Grafton was now earnestly and happily occupied, in carrying out the plans which he had devised for the welfare of his slaves. He entered upon it, with all that enthusiasm, so peculiar to his character, and had already purchased a large tract of ground, in a neighboring free State, on the confines of a young, but thriving and rapidly growing, city. The land was laid off in parcels sufficiently large for extensive gardens. Plain, but neat and commodious cottages, were erected by the slaves themselves, and to each was assigned his own establishment. Grafton now employed person thoroughly acquainted with horticultural pursuits, the cultivation of fruit, of flowers of every description, as he knew that this must be a most profitable investment, and all could easily be kept under his own eye and control. The mechanics were provided for in the city as their tastes and interests required. Grafton now informed the slaves that they were all free, but that they were bound to him as apprentices, for seven years. "It will now *depend upon* your own conduct," said he, "whether you shall at

the end of this time own the places you now live upon, or poor and degraded, become outcasts upon society. I will do all in my power to promote your interests; if you are frugal, and industrious, moral and correct, in your behavior, you will be not only respected and happy, but you will be the owners of the property upon which you live. I will keep with each of you a strict account; your earnings shall all go to the extinguishment of the debt, you owe for your houses, land, and other property. But if, on the contrary, you are improvident, lazy, and immoral in your habits, you will be poor and miserable, and I shall give to others the possessions I have designed for you. I treat you, as I would my children; work for yourselves, as you did for me and my brother, and you will easily acquire everything you need." This information and advice was received by those humble blacks with the warmest expressions of gratitude. Some of them with tears in their eyes, and upon bended knees, besought him to keep them as his slaves, to let them live with him, in their old home in Virginia.

"You and Massa Frank have always been good and kind to us; Oh, massa Charles," said a faithful old negro, "I have carried you on dese old shoulders, when you berry little boy. I stood at de bed-side of your fader when he was breving he last breff, and he ask me, 'Ben, will you be kind to my poor orphins?' and I promise him to work for you tell def. Massa Charles, I keep dat promise, put me whar you may, dese hands, and dis head work for you, till dey lay in de cold ground wid your fader."

"Ben, I thank you, and through you, all of my servants. You have been always kind, faithful and devoted. The least I can do now, is to provide for you and your children. I regret that I could not buy lands for you all in Virginia, but it was not in my power. Had I been sure of life, I might have kept you nominally as slaves, that you might have lived in Virginia. But we know not at what hour we may be called from earth, and I could not

leave your happiness, your freedom, dependent upon any event, so uncertain as human existence. I shall frequently see you, will always be ready to advise and assist you, and when I say you will make me happy by acceding to this arrangement, that it is best for you and for me, I trust you will all willingly abide by the course I have adopted. You are no longer servants, you are now, and I trust ever will be, my friends. Be true to yourselves, and you will surely be happy. Remember, that at your old home in Virginia you will ever be most welcome, and should sickness or want ever be your lot, and you cannot earn a livelihood for yourselves and your families, come back to the old homestead, you shall there be provided for."

"God bless you, dear Massa," was upon the lips, and the big tears of gratitude, and regret, upon the dark cheeks of those affectionate and faithful creatures, who would rather have still worn the chain of slavery, than break, if it must be, the silken tie of friendship and love.

CHAPTER XLII.

AUTUMN was now wearing her sombre, yet most beautiful attire. The great limner of nature had painted, in golden hues, every leaf and blossom; and field and forest smiled in radiant light, and loveliness. The hoar frost which decked with sparkling spangles the decaying trunk of the once majestic oak, beautifully contrasted with the cheerful blaze, that lighted up the hearth of the cottager. In happy unison with this outward display of nature, in her chastened magnificence, appeared Oak Lawn, its excelling beauties now draped with sadness. And yet, cheerfulness had not been banished hence, for it was a joy, and a delight to the inmates of that sweet home, to remember and talk of the virtues of her, who now had left them. The loss of one, made the possession of those that remained, all the more precious, and they now apprehended danger, where before it was never dreamed of. With heavy hearts, they were now preparing for the absence of Burns, who must leave them for his duties in Washington. The affection of the wife would prompt the wish, that he would resign his seat in Congress, compelling as it did so long, and so wide a separation, but the good sense of the father contended against the proposition, seeing in it a source of unhappiness for the husband of his daughter. His ambition for distinction, his fitness for the calling in life, which he had adopted, his great passion for active, stirring and intellectual pursuits, all demanded that he remain, as he was, in political life.

"No, my daughter," said Mr. Lefort, "you must not seek to persuade William to give up his place in Congress. He is unfitted

for agricultural pursuits. His tastes, from education and habit, imperiously demand, that he should devote himself to professional, or political pursuits."

"But, father, he would soon acquire a taste for the easy and elegant life which you lead. He might amuse his leisure hours with books, and take part in those interesting cases, constantly occurring in the courts, so that his desire for the strife of the forum might be gratified, and his family not be deprived of his society."

"I fear, Louise, that you have scarcely discovered the depths of that ambition, which now glows in the breast of your husband. He has tasted political distinction; before his eye the glittering crown has sparkled, and think you he would not chafe, were he not permitted to grasp it? Let him, for the present, remain in Congress, and with years, perhaps will come the desire for rest, and the enjoyment of domestic life."

"He has himself proposed a resignation of his seat in Congress," said Louise.

"But it was, I suspect," rejoined her father, "when he saw your brow clouded with sadness. His warm and generous nature, sympathizing with the deep afflictions, which have shrouded our home with woe, would forget all his brilliant prospects, or thrust them aside, that he might soften our grief and mitigate the anguish, which all our philosophy is inadequate to soothe or conceal."

"I do not think you understand the character of William," said Louise. "I know that he is ambitious, that like most men of his talents and acquirements, he is fond of distinction. His nature is warm and impulsive, he enters with all his might upon any subject, which engages his attention, and interest. His mind kindles, his soul burns with enthusiasm, as his glowing imagination presents before him, some achievement, worthy of his genius. But notwithstanding his vast fund of information, and knowledge, his *splendid* endowments, there is about him a shrinking delicacy,

almost amounting to timidity, which gives him, I sometimes think, a distaste for scenes of conflict, like those ever occurring in the life of a politician."

"The reason of this, my dear," said Lefort, "is obvious. He has lived so much in his closet, with his books, witnessing only the contest of mind with mind, genius struggling with difficulties, which its own inspiration alone could cope with, ambition fighting its way up the steeps, in the heat and burden of the day, its fiery eye kindling, and its own strength waxing stronger, as it sees its comrades fainting under the noontide heat, upon the scorching plain. Ah, he must not only see Laocoon struggling in the embrace of the serpents, he must himself wrestle with that power, and feel for his race and country that interest and love which would prompt him to dare all hazards, and encounter all trials. So he will realize to himself the visions which his own patriotism must have enkindled, and stamp his name indelibly upon the age in which he lives."

"But why not, father," said Louise, "make that closet life, with its rich experiences, and intimate and wide communings, tell with a still broader, and more beneficent effect? Great and important services may, undoubtedly, be rendered by the learning and wisdom which the matured and cultivated intellect brings to the consideration of questions agitating the public mind, in the august forums of nations, but is not the speaker lost sight of in the magnitude of his subject? I know, that the wonderful power of the eloquent rhetorician will accomplish his object by the mere force of his oratory. Yet after all, it is perhaps, but the power of the magician. Whence does he derive that marvellous ability? You see the armed knight, with his glittering corselet, and shining lance, and you are amazed at the prodigies of strength, and valor, which laid low in the dust, the serried ranks that opposed his stately march, but you forget the armory, in which those keen weapons were wrought, the school in which he was taught to wield them so skill-

fully! What are the splendid speeches of Burke, but learned and brilliant disquisitions upon the theory of government, prepared by long study and deep reflection, and how surpassingly strange, that that richest gem in all eloquence, his vision of the Queen of France, should have been pronounced to vacant seats. The spoken speech might drive from the house the hearers for whom it was prepared, but so long as language and civilization shall live he will ever have an admiring auditory, charmed with the written wisdom, the felicitous thought and expression, that glow upon his brilliant pages!"

"But what has all this to do, Louise, with the course in life of William?" said Lefort.

"Why, that he might accomplish all that you seem to desire, even should he resign his seat in Congress," replied Louise. "I would have him leave something behind him, something more permanent and enduring than a few brilliant speeches, upon topics that lose their interest with the occasion which called them forth. I would not have him throw aside his professional pursuits, but with the performance of these duties, here he would find time and leisure for the prosecution of those studies, which he might require, to fit him to take a high place in the field of letters. And how delightful would such a life be, useful to the world; to himself and family, delightful beyond all expression."

"I suspect some little selfishness lurks beneath the splendid picture, which your vivid imagination has portrayed with such brilliant coloring. I greatly fear, were William to resign his seat in Congress, and give up his ambitious views, he would return to the quiet of Oak Lawn, and find, beneath its ample shade, the ease and tranquillity, which impatiently listens to the calls of labor and exertion. No, Louise, he requires just such a school as Congress for the development and training of his superior intellect. There he will lose that timidity of which you speak, which, if it is not a blemish upon his character, has at least the effect of concealing,

in a measure, those high powers which will yet give him a proud position among the most eminent men of the age."

"You always overpower me," said Louise, "by the ingenuity of your arguments. I had built a beautiful castle, and you seemed too ready to demolish it."

CHAPTER XLIII

Weeks and months were now hurrying past, and but few occurrences of interest transpired, to vary the monotony of life, passed at Oak Lawn. Blanche found in the library, not only for herself, a resource against carking care, but in the absence of Burns, her father and sister had joined her, and listened to her delightful reading from favorite authors. She had learned, by bitter experience, to beware of certain books, in which were mirrored the trials of her own mind, and heart, for she had sometimes unwittingly fallen upon a page which told so touchingly of disappointed affection, that her trembling voice, and agitated countenance revealed the secret, which now she trusted to no one. The passion, which was once the joy of her heart, she at this time cherished, as does the heart-broken lover the memory of her, who went to an early grave, when their first vows were plighted. Never had she seemed so touchingly beautiful. Her manners, once coyish, her sarcastic nature, once delighting in the use of dangerous weapons, her wild disposition, almost forgetting, in its fascinating playfulness, the sensibilities of others, had now wholly changed. Now a perfect simplicity, and elegance marked all her conduct, the mild, gentle, and lovely temper, which affection imparts, was exhibited in every act and look, and the whole purpose of her being seemed to be to promote the happiness of those around her. Her heart glowed with a new and warm affection, as she received the oft-repeated kiss of little Willie, whose bright and lovely features were lighted up with that expression, which makes childhood so engaging.

Willie had the large, sparkling eye of his mother, his golden hair curled in richest profusion over his brow and neck, his face so sparkled with intelligence and good-nature, and his artless speech was so cunning, that no heart could resist the power of his enchantment. Blanche whiled away many an hour with her favorite little nephew, adorning him, gratifying his young fancy for pictures, so that before he had learned a letter, he knew all animals, from the king of the forest, down to the wee meadow mouse, and the birds of the air were as familiar to his young mind, as the playful gambols of his maltese kitten. His childish pranks were creative of great amusement. He was a funny sight, when stealing off to the library, you might see him seated in grandpa's large arm-chair, spectacles on his little face, and reading off, in his way, most grandiloquently from some huge folio.

Many a dark hour of the saddened household was cheered by the playful chattering of Willie and Nelly. The light of their sunny smiles was the rainbow of hope and promise upon a sky, where darkest clouds had gathered, and the tempest wrought its desolation.

Louise and Blanche mingled but little in general society, and ever found home, with its calm, quiet joys, most congenial to their feelings. Indeed it required great effort to induce them to return the civilities extended them by their neighbors, having, from inclination and habit, narrowed all their wishes down to the pleasures, which quietly nestled 'neath their own roof.

Mr. Carneal, a wealthy planter, had been educated at the same college with Burns, and kindred tastes and pursuits had created a strong friendship between them. And now that his early and intimate associate was domesticated at Oak Lawn, Carneal became a frequent, and welcome guest in that hospitable mansion. He had ever been a great admirer of Louise, her frank and dignified manners, her great love for literature, and her graceful and elegant conversation had quite enchanted him. His noble and generous

disposition would not permit him to enter the lists with the many champions, who would fain shiver a lance in a contest for such a prize, for Burns had confided to him the secret of his own passion.

But when the heart of the fair one had been won, often did his friend rally him with the wish that they might yet be brothers indeed, as no one could know, and resist the fascination of the sister of her, who had made him the happiest of mortals.

But Carneal as frankly told him, "No one appreciates more highly than I do, the singular beauty, the captivating manners and conversation of Miss Blanche, but two strong objections would prevent my becoming a lover: first, that her coquetry, it seems to me, so delights in conquest, that one could never even give a Yankee guess, as to the chance of success, and in the second place, if she was won, she would never do for a planter's wife. She has a little too much of the French taste, I suspect, in her composition. She might submit, perhaps, from prudential considerations to be a wife; but to be a wife without a lover, to be tied irrevocably, and entirely to one heart, would be a decree fatal to her dream of happiness.

"No, no, I have seen a bird," said he, "of exquisite plumage and of sweetest song taken from the wild wood, and imprisoned in a most beautiful cage, with seed and water in abundance, and on the morrow, it lay cold and stiff, for it had beaten out its life against the bars, even while its entamed mate was singing its most enchanting minstrelsy. I am all too happy, in visiting at the hospitable home of Mr. Lefort, and when my services are in any way useful, it will in some sort repay the civilities, so generously extended to me."

Carneal had, for years, been upon the most intimate footing with the family. He had seen the great changes which had been wrought in the character and habits of Blanche; had beheld her a ministering angel, when pestilence was spreading consternation

and death through their hitherto happy hamlet, and over their plantations. He had been a frequent, almost daily visitor at Oak Lawn, to soften, if it might be, the sorrow of its inmates, when the destroyer struck at the fairest, because the ripest fruit, upon that clustering bough. And while he had seen the father, usually so calm and collected, and the daughter, so shielded by her religion and the idolizing love of her husband, struck down by the terrible blow, he was utterly amazed that Blanche, who had so doatingly loved her mother, whose happiness seemed to be bound up in her existence, Blanche, once so gay, so volatile, so dependent, could regard the whole dark scene before her, as one which truest love, and loftiest wisdom had planned and perfected. He had seen her, while her own heart seemed breaking, in the desolation and woe around her, cheering those, who had once regarded her as the delicate flower, which the winds of heaven must not visit too roughly. Her beauty had now assumed a new charm in his eye; the strength and powers of her mind astonished him, and the sweetness and purity of her heart had taken captive his whole affections.

Yet, as this is but one of those episodes, which occur in every-day life, and which transiently crossed the path of our narrative, we must not dwell upon it. Suffice it to say, that the attentions of Carneal could not longer be mistaken for those offices of friendship which had hitherto marked his conduct.

Blanche saw, with deep regret, that he was nourishing a sentiment, which she could never reciprocate. She had regarded him almost in the light of a brother, he had so long and so intimately visited the family; he had gained her strongest friendship, by the interest he had ever manifested for, and by the many acts of kindness, which he had extended to them. She had the highest regard for his character. Blanche would, if possible, keep the secret to herself; she knew the high estimation in which he was held by her father, and the long and warm friendship

which existed between Burns and Carneal. She felt confident that she would be strongly pressed to accept his proferred hand, and that she could not give any satisfactory reason for the rejection of one, who was every way worthy of her. She avoided, as far as possible, all meetings with him, except in the presence of others, and she employed that skill, which we have before exemplified in her, in warding off all conversations which might lead to a direct proposal.

This, she felt great confidence, she might succeed in, but she feared he would ask leave of the father, to pay his addresses to the daughter. This was the consummation to be, if possible, prevented.

It was amusing to listen to her discussions upon the beauty and excellence of Platonic affection, upon the charms of friendship, upon the pure, refined love of a brother. No dross of passion to alloy the pure gold of the heart; no fire of jealousy to burn up the cherished delights of the soul.

But it was then, as now, and ever will be, that the obstacles thrown in the way of love, make it all the more intense; floods cannot drown it, and the fortress built up by female hands, however ingenious, will be assailed, whatever outposts may be stationed to guard it.

Carneal feared that there might be unwillingness on the part of Mr. Lefort, now that he had been so sadly bereaved, that Blanche should, by marriage, be more separated from him. He knew that she was now his constant companion. She accompanied him in his walks and rides; amused him in the library, by reading or conversation; while the sweet, yet melancholy hour of twilight was gladdened by the charms of music.

He was not surprised that the father should highly prize such a daughter, and that he would, if possible, retain her for his own solace and amusement. There, he imagined, was the danger to *be feared*, the difficulty to be overcome.

Carneal was handsome, his manners elegant and engaging; possessed of those accomplishments, which high birth, education, and foreign travel ever bestow; generous and noble in his nature, and with almost unbounded wealth, he had long been the desire of many a loving mother for her marriageable daughter. He would of course feel no small degree of confidence, when he concluded to ask the acceptance of all he could offer, with his heart's best treasure, by any lady of his acquaintance.

He wrote in a most complimentary strain to Mr. Lefort, praying permission to seek an alliance with a family, for whom he entertained the highest friendship and regard, through a daughter, whose grace of person and manner, whose qualities of heart and mind, were unrivalled. He remarked that he was deeply sensible of the preciousness of the treasure he coveted, but that he should hope not to take it all away, when he added to the love of the daughter, the devotion and deep regard of her husband.

The customary visit of Carneal was not repeated for a day or two, and the brow of her father, Blanche saw, was clouded with some dark, unwelcome reflections. Again and again had Mr. Lefort perused the letter containing a proposal for the hand of his daughter. The offer was eligible. Carneal was gifted with all those accomplishments, which would win the love and respect of a wife; he had wealth, and, more than all, he possessed that nobleness of soul, that generosity and goodness of heart, to which he might safely commit the happiness and welfare of his daughter.

My unwillingness to give her up is naught but selfishness. I will hesitate no longer. It may be that the love of Carneal will restore that full tide of happiness which was hers, when Blanche believed that she possessed the unchanging love of Charles Grafton. I will at once show her the letter, and advise her acceptance of the proposal.

Such were the reflections of Lefort an hour before tea, and now,

as he joined his family at that pleasant meal, he seemed once more cheerful and happy. As usual, he asked Blanche to sing, and think you it was unintentional, that that she selected a plaintive ballad, descriptive of the sadness of the household, when its most cherished object had been sought and won, and was now taken for ever from the fond embrace of the desolate father, whose staff she was in his declining years? It had the effect designed in degree but not in extent.

"Blanche," said her father, "let us take a stroll through the grounds, the evening air is delightful, and Louise will not miss us, engaged as she will be with Willie and Nelly."

CHAPTER XLIV.

How true are the instincts of the female heart. How quick and correct are its readings. A tone of voice, the expression of the eye, and often even a gesture of the hand is to the practised eye of woman, as articulate of sentiment and meaning, as aptest words. Blanche needed not language to tell her the object of the walk. She had read and deciphered the anxiety depicted upon her father's face, and she almost trembled at the calm expression, which had taken the place of recent anxiety. She knew too well the fervor and strength of his affection to fear that he would seek to coerce her inclination, but she dreaded to differ with him upon a question so important. She was perfectly assured that he would regard it as a match in all respects desirable, and it might be to him a great disappointment if she declined it.

Half jokingly, he remarked to Blanche, "that Mr. Carneal had absented himself somewhat strangely of late. Has he not found in some of our fascinating neighbors an interest, which no one lays claim to here? But, all badinage apart, dear Blanche, I asked your presence now specially to inform you, that I had received a letter from Mr. Carneal, desiring my approval of his soliciting your hand in marriage. What answer shall I write him?"

"I do not see," naively replied Blanche, "how you could spare me in your walks and in the library. Husbands, you know, are very exacting, and all the attentions of the most devoted wife are scarcely sufficient to satisfy their exorbitant demands"

"I do not think," said her father, "that I have the right to consult my own wishes in this matter. Your happiness has ever been, and ever must be, the study of my life. It has cost me one of the keenest struggles in all my experience to gain my consent to acquiesce in the wishes of Mr. Carneal. He is, in every respect, the gentleman I would have selected for you. He is disinterested and true; manly and noble, are all the qualities of his head and heart. He is free from all the frivolity and weaknesses of youth. He has known you intimately from your girlhood, and now loves you warmly and truly. His elegant bearing, his superior accomplishments, and his great wealth make him a match such as no lady would decline. But little is left to my share of life. Happy should I be to bid adieu to earth, whenever the summons comes, were I assured that you were the wife of Mr. Carneal. With two such sons-in-law, as himself and William, happily should I pass the little remnant of existence that may yet be mine. But, promise me, Blanche, that Oak Lawn shall still be your home; the generosity of such a lover would not refuse to make the experiment, and, assured am I, that our life would be so agreeable, he would not incline to change it after a fair trial."

The heart of poor Blanche was now assailed with variant and intensest emotions. It turned out as she had expected. Carneal had made the proposal to her father, and it met his hearty and decided approval. The arguments in his favor were irresistible and unanswerable. More than this, it was the strong desire of his heart that she should coincide with his wishes. Great were her struggles to decide upon the best mode of procedure.

The Blanche of former years, before trials and suffering had given strength and maturity to her character, would have laughingly rejected or accepted, as the whim or caprice of the moment might dictate, the most ardent and the most desirable of lovers; but her whole nature was now changed. High principle governed *all her conduct*, and although she was ever disinterested, she was

not once as considerate of the feelings of others. These and many other reflections passed more rapidly through her mind than we have taken time to transcribe them. How could the conflict which was going on in her mind be resolved? "Well, the letter, father," said Blanche. "You were to show it to me; the object of your walk was, you said, to know how to answer it. Could I not better tell you how to shape the reply were I to glance over its contents?"

"But you know its purport, and its object," said her father.

"Yes, or rather I may imagine the design of the writer," said Blanche. "And yet it might require a careful perusal before the most skilled in epistolary correspondence should decide upon the precise terms of an answer."

"Blanche, it seems to me you are playing the part of the skillful swordsman. You cut and thrust," continued Mr. Lefort, "with no very apparent intention of doing harm, while you are parrying off, as if to gain some decided advantage."

"With one who had been trained in the accomplished court of Louis XVI.," said Blanche, "an adept in the use of the small sword, it would become me to be wary, indeed, but to drop the simile, and to show you that I have no such object as you mistrust, will you let me advise the course which you should adopt for the settlement of the question you have propounded?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Lefort. "You are the most deeply interested, and your judgment and prudence may safely be trusted. You are too well assured of my love, to suppose for a moment I should insist upon your adoption of my views, if I thought for an instant, the step might for any reason jeopardize your happiness. I will give you the letter, and in the library, when your maiden modesty shall be satisfied that it is not a proposition to purchase your pony, or to sell me a yoke of oxen, you may write the

reply, and like a good little school-boy, I will copy it, *verbatim et punctuatim*, and send it as directed. And so we will retire to the house; Louise will feel quite neglected, I fear, in our long absence from her."

"Oh, no, she had in her basket one of her husband's letters to read over for the twentieth time, not to say a word for the interesting speech of the Hon. Mr. Somebody, upon the tariff. She has occupation enough to busy the most industrious lady in the land."

"Well, father," said Louise, upon his return from their walk, "you and Blanche are becoming quite romantic in your promenades by moonlight. You must have some most interesting matter in hand, that you trespass upon the witching hour of night, with all a lover's eagerness. Pray, would you not admit another into your counsels?"

"Oh, yes, Louise, father will freely inform you upon our important discussions. And if they should perchance be chiefly connected with governmental affairs, or with members of Congress, he will find in you, I dare say, a most ready listener. So as I have a little headache, you will excuse me, if I retire somewhat early to my chamber."

Supposing that there was no reason for secrecy, Lefort intimated to Louise, the purport of the letter, that she had handed him from Carneal, and she had divined the object he had in view, when he invited Blanche to the walk, an account of which we have just now presented to our readers. To the eager questions of Louise, as to the decision of Blanche upon the proposal so interesting to her, her father gave her as full an account as his own information permitted.

"Did she not at once decide to accept an offer so eligible?" said Louise. "I hardly know how any young lady could help falling in love with a man so handsome, so fascinating in his

manners, so intelligent, so thoroughly informed upon all subjects, as is Mr. Carneal. He is my *beau ideal* of a well-bred, accomplished gentleman. Oh, I am sure she only desires to couch her acceptance in the modest terms becoming her maidenly reserve."

"On the contrary, I more than suspect she is studying some plan by which she may decline the proffer, desirable as you may deem it. She will act upon her own high impulses. Years have added force to the pertinacity, with which she clings to opinions which she has deliberately formed, and I believe she would perish upon the rack, before she would yield against her own sense of right and duty. Yielding and most tractable in minor affairs, in mere matters of taste, or fancy, or inclination, I have never known her swerve but a hair's-breadth from the line of right as she understood it, whatever arguments or persuasions might be addressed to her. On this fact is predicated my opinion of what will, or may be, her decision upon the subject now before her. I could have wished that she would have clearly seen her own happiness promoted by a marriage with Mr. Carneal. I said nothing to her about the large and ruinous sums for which your husband and myself have been involved, for Mr. S., and that the control of the whole thing was with Mr. Carneal. William writes me, that if Carneal concludes to make the large advance requisite, it will be, in the end, a safe and good investment, and all our perplexities will be disposed of. If not, the amount is so large, no one can be found to lend the required sum, and Mr. S., must inevitably fail, and bring down with him William and myself. I wish the offer of Mr. Carneal had been deferred. It places us in circumstances, the most embarrassing."

"I will at once see Blanche," said Louise, "it is but right that she should be informed upon the importance of her decision, for it might be that mere caprice, or some slight preference would guide her conduct. She might fancy that a single life would be happy enough, and as no interest but her own were to be con-

sulted, that a feather's weight would turn the scale one way or the other."

"Urge her not, my daughter, to sacrifice her own happiness to promote our comfort. Providence will provide for us a way of escape, if by it our real good is to be advanced.

CHAPTER XLV.

We will now follow to her chamber, our heroine, whose already overwrought sensibilities were to be taxed with new and severe trials. Her throbbing temples told the force of the excitement that was preying upon her mind. Deeply had she regretted the step that Carneal had taken. She now was pained that she had not suffered him to learn her views and feelings, without the knowledge of any one but themselves. Her father's wishes were strong and decided. He had come to the resolution of giving up his daughter, through suffering the most intense. His conduct had been so disinterested and kind, his love for her so marked, and so far seeing, and his peace of mind as affected by her future situation, so dependent upon her choice, that she at times felt, as if duty demanded of her a sacrifice of all her own partialities, indeed her own happiness, and she was ready to make it. Self, she could immolate upon the altar of parental love.

Her sister had just joined her, and when she found that Blanche was lending a listless ear to her glowing descriptions of the singular personal attractions of Carneal, that she was not to be won by the splendid bauble of wealth and position, that her pride could not be awakened by the assurance that her attractions had gained a conquest, gratifying to the natural self-esteem and ambition of her sex, she then alluded to the great wealth of Mr. Carneal.

"Think you," interrupted Blanche, "that I could be bought for so many dollars and cents? Could you deem me so unworthy of

one so noble, and so generous, as you have described Mr. Carneal to be, and you have not told me half his worth, for I have seen him pour out his treasure, like water, at the call of suffering humanity; could you, my dear sister, suspect me guilty of such heartlessness, of such mercenary motives, that I would accept the heart and hand of him, so proud, so peerless, merely that I might gain the key which unlocks his vast treasures?"

"No, you misapprehend me, Blanche. I was but appealing to your generosity. I was about to tell you that the whole fortune of my father, now aged and broken, of the husband of your sister, upon whom are dependent the welfare of your own little Willie and dear Nelly, are hanging upon your decision. Could you not sacrifice"—

"Sacrifice!" interrupted Blanche. "What have I of happiness, what is there to me in all the future, that I would not offer to avert but one hour of trouble from the heart of him, whose happiness is more precious to me than life itself? To see him whom I love so fondly, when time has furrowed that noble brow with care, and sorrow and disappointment have dimmed his eye, deprived of the comforts now so necessary to him, forced by the iron hand of stern necessity once more to abandon home, with no wife to solace him, the energies and hopes of manhood extinguished by the frost of age, could I deliberately count the cost, when I had the ability to save?"

"Oh, you will then," said Louise, "rescue our dear and only parent, from the ruin which is impending over him. How surely his gray hairs would be hurried to an untimely grave, were these disasters, now so threatening, to come upon him. Even while the fire of youth and hope was warm and glowing at his heart, and the prospect of relief was bright before us, I have seen him, when exiled from our early home, so weighed down with sad and dark reflections, that but for the wise counsels, the cheerful, loving words of our dear sainted mother, he would have given up in

despair, or rushed wildly upon destruction, in battling for the rights which had been wrested from him. You will, I know, dear sister, yield all preferences, and at once decide the fate of those you love so dearly, by determining to accept the proposals of Mr. Carneal."

"Never, never, though it involve the present weal of those, dearer to me than words can tell. Were mine but the offering of life, of happiness, with what joy would I make it; but to knowingly sacrifice principle, honor, truth—to consent to be his wife, with at least the implied understanding, that all the love and affection which prompted the offer are reciprocated; with the smile of truth upon my lips, and the treachery of falsehood in my heart, thus to meet the noble ingenuousness, written upon the fair brow of Henry Carneal, would still the pulsations of my heart for ever!" Louise had no answer for sentiments so true, so just, and the expression which glowed upon the face of Blanche so heightened the effect of the language, gave such vividness and force to her remarks, that tears were the only reply. Never did Louise so love her sister as at this moment. Never had she witnessed the exhibition of such exalted virtue, burning up in the crucible of truth, every selfish and unworthy action.

Dark as seemed the prospect before her, Blanche saw but one path in which she might walk. It was irradiated by the light of principle. She would make no compromises, which might tarnish the brightness, or dim the lustre of the jewel in the crown of moral rectitude.

"O could I," she said to herself, "have listened to the voice of expediency, and, with the deep abiding consciousness, that all my feelings revolted at the bare idea of marriage with any one but him, whom I have loved so blindly, and yet so fatally, could I, notwithstanding all this, have accepted the hand of Carneal, I should not only have rendered myself miserable, but far worse, I should have blighted the hopes, and for ever marred the bliss of

him who had loved me for my truth. I will be frank and fearless; with a womanly dignity I will tell him all my struggles, and sure I am, that he has heart enough to appreciate my conduct, honor sufficient to be the safe repository of such delicate and confidential disclosures.

With this resolution, and with the peace, which implicitly trusts in the eventual, happy results of virtuous conduct, sweet and soothing sleep chased care and sorrow from the heart of Blanche, and the dawn of morning found her refreshed and happy, prepared for whatever might await her.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Breakfast being over, Louise purposely left Blanche with her father. She commenced conversation by desiring him to ask for her, as soon as might be convenient, a personal interview with Mr. Carneal. I desire to explain truly to him the reasons which guide my conduct. He will then feel no wounding of self-esteem, and there will be no diminution of friendship."

"I prefer it should be so, Blanche. Mr. Carneal is a man of honor and of worth. I value highly his friendship, and should greatly regret that he might think he had just cause to withhold it. He will soon be here, and I shall absent myself that I may not for a moment prevent a meeting, which will terminate this unhappy affair."

Blanche thought that she had so schooled her feelings, that she was prepared for this trying interview, and yet, when she saw the stately and handsome form of Carneal, as he rode up the avenue, her heart beat violently; for an instant she entirely lost her self-possession. Moments seemed an age, and it required all the force of her character to call back the powers of her mind. A soft blush mantled the pale cheek of Blanche, and a slight tremor marked her movements, as she advanced to welcome Carneal. She felt that her voice was betraying her emotions, as she could scarce control its utterances. Her embarrassment was greatly increased, as she saw the elation of feeling stamped upon the brow, and the hope kindling the eye of her impassioned lover. With true womanly discernment, she perceived that Carneal had misconstrued

the note of her father; that he was evidently expecting to hear from her lips the answer which his love desired to the proposal he had made.

"I was most happy, Miss Lefort, in learning from your father's note this morning, that I had his approval in the offer of my heart to his charming daughter, and I have not lost a moment in obeying your summons to make my appearance at Oak Lawn. I came to express the solicitude I have felt for the last twenty-four hours, while I have been compelled to remain in doubt and uncertainty, as to the result of my request to your father. Long have I known and admired you, and as I have acquired a truer insight of your character, as it has been exemplified in all the relations of life, my admiration has ripened into the warmest love. May I hope that such a sentiment meets a kindred feeling in your own heart?"

Blanche would have interrupted him, but the emotions of her heart quite overpowered her. After a moment's pause, she replied,

"I am truly grateful for the approval my conduct has met in your judgment. I know no one for whom I entertain a truer respect, whose friendship and regard I hold in higher estimation than your own. Our long and intimate acquaintanceship, the unnumbered offices of kindness, have awakened within me, may I say it, the love of a sister. In our household you have supplied the place of a brother. How can I find words to tell my deep regret that you were ever induced to make the proposal of this morning, since I am compelled to decline it. Mr. Carneal, at the risk even of your respect, I must be frank and explicit. Your high character demands it. The regard I feel for you, the warm and strong friendship you have ever manifested for each member of our family, requires that I should, with you, have no concealment. Were it in my power to have reciprocated the sentiment which induced your offer, had not the freshness of my heart faded under the blighting frosts of disappointment; had not the dream of love

so vital to the happiness of wedded life, been doomed to perish for ever; had yours been my earliest acquaintance, I will frankly tell you, that you would have easily won the devotion of my heart. For you, I now feel, and ever shall, the highest esteem, and I need not tell you that it is with the deepest sorrow, I am compelled to refuse my acquiescence in the proposal you make me."

"But, Miss Lefort, that disappointment may be healed. Time and the devotions of a heart, all your own; new scenes, new hopes will displace all unpleasant recollections, and the regard which you have so kindly expressed for me will ripen into love. I will not wound your feelings by further asking your confidence, but I will take all the risk. I will accept, at present with a heart so blighted, that it hopes for no recovery."

"Do not, Mr. Carneal, press your request; you know me too well to doubt my sincerity. I have thrown off with greatest difficulty all maidenly reserve, and have trusted you with a secret which I have disclosed to no one living. I thought it due to your friendship; I would make almost any sacrifice to hold a place in your regard. To the proposals of others, I have simply returned polite refusals. Rest assured that sooner than put at imminent hazard the future happiness of one in whom I feel so deep an interest, by an acceptance of the offer you have made me, I should regard it as my duty to suffer even the loss of your friendship. Could I say more, while manifesting the regret I feel in these trying circumstances? must I, Mr. Carneal, add to the list of trials which have marked my short, yet not uneventful life, the disruption of a friendship to me of so much value as your own?"

"No, no, Miss Blanche, let me have that place in your heart, which a brother might hold, and I will yet be happy. I will, for the present at least, try and forget this scene, so full of disappoint ment. Promise me that I may still hope for a continuance of that regard, which you have so kindly expressed for me."

"You can never know, Mr. Carneal, what a load you have lifted from my heart. The assurance that I have not lost a friend, that you are to be to us as ever, is to me a source of unmingled happiness. May I ask for a proof of your friendship by dining with us, *en famille*, and the assurance that you will visit us unceremoniously as ever?"

"Certainly. But if I should disfigure your snowy table by dropping my spoon, or any other *faux pas*, please attribute it to this interview, and help me out of my difficulty."

Mr. Carneal and Blanche met Mr. Lefort upon his return to the house. A slight embarrassment for a moment was perceptible, but, by some ready and playful remark of Blanche, it was at once relieved, and in a few moments, all appeared as if nothing unusual had occurred. Louise was surprised to see how entirely unchanged in their conduct to each other during dinner, were Carneal and her sister. There was a little fluttering at her heart when she heard Carneal tell her father he would be glad to see him for a few moments in the library before his departure. Mr. Lefort was at first slightly disconcerted, but the frank and manly manner of Carneal, at once banished all unpleasant feeling.

"I have recently," said Carneal, "received some propositions from our neighbor, Mr. S., to join him in a large speculation, which seems to me is a most excellent investment. In looking over the papers, I find you, and my friend William Burns, had aided S. in the purchase. I thought perhaps you might have some interest, and so would not interfere. He assured me you had not, that it was a mere act of friendship on your part. I propose to advance all the money necessary, and to unite with him in the purchase, if agreeable to you, and we will then cancel the notes which you have signed."

"Mr. S. told you truly," replied Lefort, "that we signed for him merely as his security. We shall be highly gratified if you are

sure it will be for your interest, to do as you propose, for we were greatly apprehensive of embarrassment from the want of capital on the part of Mr. S."

"I am truly glad that while I can subserve my own interest, I can at the same time benefit you. To-morrow I shall bring you the notes, upon which your own, and the name of Mr. Burns appear as security."

Carneal had been so charmed by the frank and honorable conduct of Blanche, felt so assured of the high place which he held in her regard, the value she placed upon his own friendship, that the bitter disappointment of a refusal was hardly felt by him. His own pride of character had not been wounded. He had been treated in so confidential a manner, the recesses of the heart, which he so prized and coveted, had been so laid open to his inspection, that his deepest interest and sympathy was awakened, and now the desire of soothing the secret sorrows of that young, bright being, seemed the object of his desire. Did not hope whisper that in playing the physician for that wounded spirit, he would accomplish the object of his wishes, that like the homœopathist, he would remove the malady of his beautiful patient, by producing another similar affection, of which he should have the easy and entire control?

After his departure, Lefort returned with a cheerful heart to the society of his daughters. He related to them the object of Carneal in his private interview, and remarked, "to you Blanche, I suspect we are indebted for this most fortunate escape from what seemed inevitable ruin."

"No, dear father, I never alluded to the subject to which you refer, in my conversation with Mr. Carneal. All I know is, that we are as good, if not better friends, than we ever have been, and what we feared has resulted in good."

"I know not why, Blanche," said Louise, "but I felt an assurance when I left you the other evening that all would be well.

And when my fears would for a moment predominate, when my apprehensions would present to my excited imagination a picture of distress, and for the instant banish sleep from my eyelids, the soft, sweet light, reflected from virtuous conduct, would dispel the dark shadow, and in soothing slumber I forgot all dread of the future."

"I confess," said Blanche, "that your fears were not greater than my own. And I saw no way of escape. I fancied that one small word of mine would perhaps, and probably, save from the greatest pecuniary embarrassment my father and William—or seal their ruin. I did not dare debate the question, what should be the line of my conduct. An unseen influence has guided us all aright, and taught us the lesson so difficult to practice, that we should never consider the expediency of important action, until we have honestly decided in regard to its correctness. I am sure that Mr. Carneal was never so true a friend of ours as now. His happiness has not been jeopardized. He has conferred upon us no particular obligation, as he had decided, before his interview with me, to do for his own good, just what father desired for the promotion of his advantage."

CHAPTER XLVII.

The overthrow of a republican form of government, and the restoration of monarchy, was hailed with rapture by those, who had been long exiled from their beloved France. Some had been passing the long and miserable years of absence in a quiet obscure retreat in England, deprived of the luxuries, the comforts even, which their wealth and position in their native land had given them. Others were scattered over Europe, suffering from the keen pangs of penury and want, anxiously looking for the approach of that change, which would permit them to return in safety to the homes they were compelled to abandon.

Lefort was leading a calm, contented, and happy life in his adopted home in Louisiana. The intelligence that the property as well as the honors was restored, under the munificent Charles X., to those, who had been deprived of both by the savage ferocity, which marked the revolutionists of France, reached him, while peacefully pursuing his unambitious avocations upon the banks of the Teche. How different his life in that quiet, domestic circle, undisturbed by rude alarms, or demoniac passions, compared with that feverish existence in Paris, where wild ungovernable desires ruled the busy hour.

A paragraph in a newspaper might pile up the gay streets of the city with barricades, from the shelter of which, a furious mob would, with relentless, undistinguishable hate, destroy all that was beautiful, and from the same windows, from which a few days previous, gay voices were cheering, and delicate hands were flinging

bouquets and garlands upon the heads of that soldiery, which had won immortality for France upon fields of blood and carnage, were now thrown, upon the same heads, by the same hands, missiles of destruction, even while in discharge of a soldier's duty, saving their destroyers from sottish brutality and maddening lust.

Who that had seen and participated in the horrors of a *coup d'état*, in the city of Paris, would not learn the instability of fortune and position? Who would not feel that he was instantly liable to the loss of more than treasure, that every possession which was dear to him, might, in a moment, be ruthlessly torn from him by mere brute force and lawless rapacity? Such were the reflections of Lefort, as he daily perused the exciting accounts which he received from France. Should he risk the happiness of his family, abandon this secure and peaceful abode, that he might again share the honors and the dangers of rank and distinction in his native land? What were wealth and honors worth, if they were to be purchased at the imminent risk of the life and happiness of those most dear to him?

Louise and her father were seated alone in the library while he was engaged in reading the news of the progress of affairs in Paris.

"Could you not," said Louise, "return to Paris, and without mingling in political strife, recover the fortune you have lost? Charles X., it seems, is determined that those who shared misfortunes with him upon the overthrow of the government shall now partake of all the advantages flowing from the Restoration."

"I am happy now, Louise. I have no desire to return to France. I have no confidence in the stability of the institutions of that fatal land. Here I can perceive the wonderful contrast between the habits, customs, modes of thinking, and conduct of the people of this Republic, and those of France. All here are accustomed to regard the institutions of the country with the highest

reverence. The Constitution and laws are the workmanship of their own hands, and the men in power are merely entrusted with the requisite authority for the just and proper administration of that government. No armed force, arrayed on account of the misuse and abuse of that authority, deluging with blood our streets and habitations, destroying, with Vandal hands, every work of art, is requisite to displace those who may be clothed with the insignia of office, but as some quiet morning, from every hamlet and town in the land, may be seen a body of calm and peaceful citizens thoughtfully gathered about an unpretending town-house, a slip of paper is deposited in a box, and on the morrow you wake up, and the public press, with its utterings more potent than the roar of bellowing batteries, or armed hosts, tells you that a revolution has been accomplished, that those who have betrayed the trusts reposed in them, are hurled from office. No one in Europe, certainly in France, can have any conception of that beautiful system of government, which has been established upon this side of the water."

"But you need not give up your adopted home, father. An absence of a few months only will be required. Your health, and particularly the health of Blanche, demands a change of scene. Recently, I have observed, she indulges those fits of abstraction, which at one time evidenced a deep-seated melancholy, which, you recollect greatly alarmed us."

"Do you think," said her father, "that Blanche would desire now to revisit France?"

"No. I think she would prefer remaining at home," said Louise. "But, so great is her affection for you, so devoted is she to your comfort and happiness, that, if she knew that you had decided upon a return to Paris, she would require no urging to induce her to join you."

She, who was the subject of their conversation, now entered the apartment.

"Blanche," said her father, "what think you to my recrossing the sea, and returning to Paris?"

"For what purpose, father? Could aught of good be accomplished by so long a journey?"

"Yes, probably. By a decree of the new government, those who, from necessity abandoned their homes and estates during the imperial *régime*, are now invited to return, and will, undoubtedly, be restored to the honors and estates unjustly taken from them."

"I would not see you again, a partaker of administrative honors in your native land. Sure I am, you would be happier here. You would never consent that the ocean should separate you from William, Louise, and their children. I should dislike to see you, at your time of life, periling happiness, every comfort, for the miserable baubles which fame has to offer."

"Ought I not to be willing, for the sake of my family, if I heeded not the voice of patriotism, to run the hazard, and make the sacrifice. Wealth and position might be of great service to the children of Louise, if of no consequence to us. At all events, I might go to France, and, after a few months' absence, return to you all with the estates, which were mine by every right."

"I would consent to this, upon one condition, father, that you would permit me to accompany you. I would promise not to engross too much of your time, or attention."

Lefort, at this time, received a letter from Louis Philippe, urging him to return imediately to France. "Our excellent monarch, Charles X.," said he, "has just passed the act, awarding a milliard of indemnity to the *émigrés*, who have suffered from the revolutionary proscriptions. I have myself," he added, "received fourteen millions, and, for the asking, you will be restored to the estates, which were wrested from you. The noble blood in your veins will make you an especial favorite with *Charles*, and I need not assure you, with what pleasure I shall

reciprocate these large obligations you placed me under, when I visited you during your own exile. I was then, a wanderer, and almost penniless. From you I received that warm, generous hospitality, which relieved me from that *ennui*, which was destroying me. Your house, your heart, and your purse were open to my necessities; and now I am favored by Providence with an opportunity to return, in part, at least, those favors so nobly bestowed by you. I have the ear of the king; he remembers your services, your name is high upon his list, of those whose sufferings for the crown are to be amply repaid. Return, at once, while his heart is full and warm, and take again your accustomed place at the peerage, and receive, at his hands, the property confiscated by a *parvenu* power."

This letter from one now powerful, and anxious to promote his interests, decided Lefort to again cross the ocean, and once more behold his still beloved France.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Burns had now returned from Washington, and fully entered into the plans and views of Mr. Lefort, in regard to his intended journey. He soothed the fears and apprehensions of Louise, assuring her that such a journey, from change of scene, by the great benefit to be derived from a sea voyage, the old associations which will be awakened in his mind, would add many years to the precious life of her father. He will be greatly interested in the state of affairs now existing in his native land, and will renew acquaintances with those, who, in former times, were associated with him as the council of the king. And Charles, the brother of him who had sat upon the throne, which had been strengthened by the manly support of your father, will be delighted to reward him for the toils and perils which he has endured on account of royalty.

What a meeting! what a presence! I can scarcely resist the impulses of my heart to be present upon an occasion so deeply affecting. And Blanche, with what grace and dignity will she appear in the polished circles of Paris. Her classic face, her elegant manners, education and accomplishments, will fit her to take that place among the high-born ladies of France, which, years ago, your now lamented mother so worthily occupied."

"Some of these considerations influenced my own mind, dear William, and induced me to urge father to adopt the advice of his old friends in France, and revisit that country, even though my *heart was* lacerated at the bare idea of a separation."

"You urged him to go? Why you surprise me, Louise, for your eyes were filled with tears, and your utterance quite choked, even when you announced to me his expected departure. But that is so like your sex. Your judgments are always right, and yet you ever permit that full expression of feeling, which, with us, would prevent the execution of the object."

"Well, then," said Louise, "we enjoy the double satisfaction of accomplishing the good, and giving free vent to our womanly sensibilities. Our heads and hearts go together, the one the helm, the other the impulsive power, in navigating life's great ocean, and who shall say that we are not as sure of reaching in safety the haven of bliss, as those of the stronger sex?"

"You are the weaker vessels, it is said by high authority," remarked William, "how then can you expect to be able to outride the storm? On placid seas, and with favoring gales, your little barks would gaily dance upon the silver wave, but when the tempest darkens the horizon, and its angry voice is heard in the breeze, then discretion would suggest that you hie home with all possible dispatch. But, badinage apart, whatever might have been the motive, I am truly surprised that you should have urged upon your father to go to France. Trust me, he nor Helen will ever regret that they have decided to do so."

"Grafton forbade me to mention it to any of my family, that he himself was on the eve of departure for the same country. His object was, for some reason he did not disclose, to keep it a secret from Blanche, so you will not mention this to any one. I cannot tell you how anxiously I look for a meeting between these two kindred spirits. I will not attempt to predict what might be the result of such an interview; but if nothing more, it would explain the conduct, which now appears so wrapped up from mortal vision."

The departure of Lefort and Blanche soon followed this conversation, and it required all the philosophy of William and Louise

to chase away the sadness which was thereby created. Well was it for their peace that the delightful prattle of their fascinating children was permitted them, for it soothed the sorrow, which would, in spite of themselves, darken their dwelling. We will for the moment bid adieu to Oak Lawn, and follow Mr. Lefort and his daughter, now on their way to Paris.

66

CHAPTER XLIX.

So many and so sad had been the changes at Oak Lawn, reaching those also who had been upon an intimate footing in that most hospitable family, that the departure of Mr. Lefort and of Blanche —of the father so beloved, the sister so dear and so cherished— was an event fraught with sadness for those who remained at the cottage. Man finds in out-door employments, in the pursuits and occupations marked out by ambition, which never slumbers or rests, in books, or society, a relief from the sadness occasioned by the absence of those whom he loves; while the very employments of woman seem calculated to nourish and deepen the grief which will spring up in her heart, as she imprints the last, warm kiss upon the lips of those, whose absence she has already felt in anticipation.

Every breeze that swept wildly over the boundless prairies— every flash which the red lightning threw across the darkened horizon—every voice of the thunder which spoke so fearfully from the blackened clouds, awakened in the mind of Louise for her father and Blanche the most gloomy apprehensions. Her vivid imagination painted most glowingly and distinctly the frail bark which was bearing upon the angry bosom of the swollen waves these objects of her heart's best affections. Now, in fancy, she saw it dismasted, dismantled, at the mercy of the wild surges, whose roar almost reached her ear, now alive to every sound that threatened danger, and anon she beheld it struck by a bolt from a thunder-cloud, the fierce flame leaping from spar to spar, and lick-

ing, with its forked tongue, the whitened sail that was fluttering in the breeze. It required all the skill and tenderness of her husband to allay the fears, which would, in spite of herself, come home to the anxious and perturbed bosom of Louise, and again and again did she regret that she had not used all her power to prevent them from incurring such dangers.

"I am surprised, dear Louise, that you should give way to such idle fancies. The ship which your father and myself selected is new, most thoroughly built, and commanded by one of the most experienced and skillful officers that ever crossed the Atlantic, and at this season of the year, the sea is as smooth as a lake, with just breeze enough to bear them to their destined haven."

"I know, William, that it is foolish to give way to such apprehensions, which fill with direst anguish, so many of my waking and sleeping hours. My fears give the hue and coloring to all my dreams, and I awake from the visions of the night, unrefreshed and unhappy."

"Why not, Louise, look upon the bright side of the picture. I can see in my mind's eye your father and Blanche cheerful and happy from the invigorating effects of their voyage, the bright hue of health mantling the cheek of your dear sister, and the eye of your father kindling with a new brilliancy, as he anticipates a favorable result from the enterprise he has undertaken."

"When do you think we may hear from them?" said Louise.

"Hardly before their arrival at Liverpool," said Burns. "My friends, however, in New Orleans, have promised me, that should the ship be spoken by any returning vessel, they will immediately acquaint me of it. She has been out now two weeks; some tidings may have reached her owners in New Orleans."

"How I wish I were there, that I might, at the earliest moment, receive such joyful tidings as would tell of our dear absent ones," said Louise.

"*You* will, then," replied Burns, "be willing to accompany me

to that city, as I am compelled to go there upon business, growing out of the affairs of Charles Grafton."

"With all my heart," said Louise. "Indeed, I could not be left alone in our now broken household. But the children"——

"O, we will take all with us," said Burns. "You must have no further cause for apprehension or trouble; and I hope, in New Orleans, so gay and so full of objects of interest, you will cease to feel or cherish such groundless fears, as have of late disturbed you."

On the following day they started on their journey, which was marked by no incident of interest. After a few days their eyes were greeted by the tall spires, which told them that the Crescent City was within their view.

"Louise," said Burns, "your looks betray disappointment, as you approach the Capital of the State of Louisiana. You must not expect to see in our young country, cities and towns such as you have witnessed in the Old World. Give to ours the years of Paris, and upon the banks of the Mississippi, as upon the banks of the Seine, shall appear a most magnificent mart of trade, adorned by its structures, rivalling the Palais Royal, and the Gallery of the Louvre."

"One thing I know I shall find," said Blanche, "a kind and generous hospitality, which nowhere upon the globe can be exceeded."

"And after all," said Burns, "how does the pomp and magnificence of wealth and luxury fail to bring happiness to the heart of the stranger, if the kind offices of friendship and hospitality are withheld. The eye may be dazzled by sights most wonderful and attractive, the ear be regaled by strains most ravishing, and yet the spirit will faint, if for it there are no voices of welcome, no assurances, that a kindred sentiment sympathizes with its deepest emotions."

They had now been in New Orleans a week. The hospitable

and elegant mansion of Mr. Livingston, threw open its doors for their reception, and they found within it every luxury and enjoyment which the heart could desire. So complete, so sincere was the welcome, so unbounded the hospitality, and the mode of life on so large and free a scale, that Louise could realize the fullness of the meaning of the expression of Mr. L., that they would consider the house as their own, during their stay in the city. A large and magnificent party given for them by Mrs. Livingston, introduced them to society, and Louise had little else to do than receive the calls, and comply with the invitations which crowded upon them.

"I had no idea," said Louise to her husband, as she found the privacy of her chamber, "of the elegance and taste, which I see displayed in the mode of life, that prevails at New Orleans. The houses furnished with the magnificence which you see in Paris, and the ladies dressed with all the taste and richness, which you behold in the gayest *salons* of that unrivalled city."

"I am glad," said Burns, "you are so agreeably disappointed."

"I almost fancied myself, when in conversation, to be in my own native land. Many were more familiar with the scenes in which I passed my earlier years, than myself, and the manners, and the language so precisely those to which I was accustomed, when dwelling in our house upon the Seine, that it required no great stretch of the imagination to believe myself to be in France."

"Many of the young gentlemen have received their education in France," said Burns, "and being of French extraction, they have more the manners and habits of that nation, than of our own."

"Mrs. Burns," said Mr. Livingston, "I shall be entitled to, and shall receive, I know, one of your blandest, sweetest smiles, when I tell you, that we have this morning received intelligence of the safe arrival of the ship, in which your father and sister sailed. They had a quick and pleasant voyage, and soon you may expect

from the pen of Miss Blanche, an answer to all the queries, which your heart is desirous of knowing."

"My husband will permit me more than a smile, and will not scold me if I adopt the French fashion," said Louise, "and with a kiss repay you for news so grateful to my heart."

"You had best consider, before, by your example," said her husband, "you tempt me to play the gallant, where beauty is so attractive, and smiles, so captivating and winning."

"The frost of New England manners, Mr. Burns," said Mr. Livingston, "surely must have all melted and vanished under the genial influence of the fair daughters of our sunny clime. And from the graceful compliments, the effects of which I so often see upon the heightened color of beauty's cheek, I am assured that you have readily fallen into the habits of our Southern region."

"Where customs and habits are so agreeable to the heart," said Burns, "the process is not slow or difficult, which leads us to their adoption. I think we of the North are somewhat maligned or misrepresented, when we are spoken of as cold and distant in our manners and dispositions."

"If you were the true type or representative of New England manners, I might agree with your remark," said Mr. Livingston. "But in your far-famed city of notions, they surely have the reputation of great coldness of manner, and yet I must admit, that nowhere have I received the attention, and kindness, so grateful to a stranger, to a larger and fuller extent than in Boston."

CHAPTER L.

Soon after the return of William Burns and his family to Oak Lawn, Paul Eaton called, preparatory to his departure from Louisiana. He had but recently returned from a tour through the Western States, and had, during his absence, visited the little colony, which Charles Grafton had established in the neighborhood of a large city in the West.

"I know," said he, addressing himself to Mr. and Mrs. Burns, "that you would be gratified to learn the success of a project, most dear to the heart of one of the noblest philanthropists."

"To whom, and to what enterprise do you refer, Mr. Eaton?" said Burns.

"What is uppermost in my own mind," replied Eaton, "I ever fancy occupies the thoughts of others. In the habit I have unfortunately acquired of absent-mindedness, I had quite overlooked the fact that you could not have known of my tour of observation."

"Never mind, Mr. Eaton, you have but employed the art of the skilful orator in arousing our attention, and exciting our curiosity. We are now all impatience to hear the account you promised to give us of your journeyings."

"I referred," said Eaton, "to Mr. Charles Grafton, and to the slaves he has most generously manumitted. He has, at great expense of time, labor, and money, provided them with everything necessary for their present situation. They have now comfortable homes, and their children have all the advantages of a good

education. The men are industrious and economical, and the regular habits of labor, which they acquired, while in bondage, are now of great advantage to them. They are not addicted to any of the evil habits or practices, which unfortunately mar the happiness, and destroy the usefulness of so many among our laboring classes. Their wives are chaste and virtuous, and strive by their exertions to amass property for their families. The children are all industrious, and have learned the useful lesson of obedience."

"How are they regarded," said Burns, "by their white neighbors?"

"I am sorry to say," replied Eaton, "with no little degree of disfavor. Even those, who are loudest in their denunciations of slavery, are the least tolerant of the dark skins of these children of Africa. And yet I am greatly surprised, for the blacks are all respectful, obliging, and kind, and are not dependent upon any one."

"I regret to admit there is a strange contradiction," said Burns, "in the conduct of those who reside in the free States, upon the subject of the rights of the colored race. They exclaim with holy horror against 'the sin of slavery,' and yet their prejudice against color is vastly greater than it is at the South. And in some of the free States they have carried it to the extent of passing laws forbidding free persons of color to reside within the limits of the State."

"My own views," said Eaton, "upon the subject of slavery, have been greatly modified by a Southern residence. I still regard slavery as a great evil, and pray that it may, ere long, cease to exist in our happy country. I now look at it from a different stand-point."

"Do tell me your views upon this most difficult subject," said Burns. "I fear it may hereafter be the occasion of great difficulty in our widely extended country. The wily politician, and the wild fanatic may make it the source of evil unparalleled."

"In the affairs of nations," said Eaton, "we are prone to take a too narrow and partial view. We look to events as they strike our own limited, and short-sighted vision. As Christians, we must suppose that slavery was permitted to be established here for wise purposes. May it not have been that these sable children of Africa, amidst trials the most austere, and sufferings the most intense, should endure the horrors of the middle passage even, and finally be reduced to slavery, that the good of the race might be promoted? Who can doubt that the condition of the African in his native land, is a thousand times worse than that of the slave in Louisiana. A race of cannibals, rioting in all the pollutions of the most savage life, cruel, barbarous and besotted by ignorance and superstition, they are but little elevated above the beasts which perish.' May it not be that the designs of all-wise Providence should permit the present condition of our blacks, that they might witness the blessings of civilization and christianity, and to some extent, at least, enjoy the fruits flowing therefrom, that they might be hereafter restored to Africa, and carry with them the seed, from which an abundant harvest of good should be realised for that ill-fated, ill-starred people. Great revolutions and changes with nations, as well as in nature, are effected only by time. The vast cycle of years is marching majestically on its course, and its end, its results, can only be seen by the eye of Omniscience. 'One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' We should not be too hasty or impatient in our judgments of human affairs."

"It seems to me," said Burns, "this is the true view to take of this great question. When reading of the small beginings of our now powerful nation, all was ascribed to the direction of that Providence, which was so signally displayed with 'the chosen people.' In the view of the religionists of that day, the hunting-grounds of the Indian, and the sweet streams, where danced his *light canoe*, belonged, by a decree of Providence, to the pale faces.

I do not admit that any wrong will go unpunished, or can be justified on the ground of expediency. But we must leave to time and circumstance to work out those great political advantages which are to affect, for good or for evil, the destinies of millions, taking care that, individually, we do not violate the golden rule, which has been left us for our guidance and direction."

"In my opinion," so long as the slaveholder shall treat with humanity and kindness," said Eaton, "the slaves with which he is entrusted, he is free from all sin in this regard. All cruelty and wrong will meet, sooner or later, with the direst retribution. How awfully and signally was this manifested in the conduct and punishment of Frank Grafton. How sure and how severe was the penalty for his deep transgressions."

CHAPTER LI.

Louise found, upon her return home a large package from Blanche. This was the first separation of any length, which had ever marred the happiness of these affectionate and devoted sisters. With what rapture did she recognize the chirography, traced by the fair hand of one so cherished. How did quick coming fancies bring before her, the dear image of the person, whose glowing thoughts, were now, as if by magic, spread out for her perusal, and whose last affectionate acts could almost be seen upon the wax, bearing, as it did in its motto, the charmed words "*toujours le même.*"

Yes, dear Blanche, said Louise to herself, you *are* always the same. The same, kind, noble, self-sacrificing girl, the same devoted, affectionate sister, the same peerless, priceless being in all the varied situations of our many-colored existence. With you time nor distance can work any change. Your untravelled heart looks back, even amidst scenes the most fascinating, and from persons the most bewitching, to the old spot, which affection has consecrated, and to the old faces, which earliest love has crowned with an undying interest. Oh! how my heart would adopt for its motto,

"Si je vous perds, je suis perdu."

Blanche had passed an hour each evening in jotting down such occurrences of the day, as she thought might amuse her sister, a part of which we will transcribe for our readers.

"*At sea.*—We have now been out four days, and this is the

first, en which I have left my state room. The dark line of sea-coast had scarcely faded from my view, before the sickness of heart, occasioned by separation from those so dear to us at Oak Lawn, was, for the time, displaced by that terrible sea-sickness, which renders one completely selfish, or so despairing, that everything seems valueless. If I were once more beneath our own cottage roof, could again sit under the wide-spreading oak, whose sheltering branches form so delightful a retreat, said I then to myself, naught would tempt me to roam from a spot so charming. But now I can walk the deck of our noble, gallant ship, and enjoy that elation of feeling, so peculiar to a voyager upon the deep. How delightful to watch the slow coming of the tall, crested wave, marching with its fellows, seemingly to attack this stranger upon its wide domain, and as though startled by the majestic movement of the iron-ribbed monster, with a sullen, subdued roar separating and dispersing, as if to gather some mightier forces for the awful conflict. The playful gambols of the porpoises, the exquisite beauty of colour, so changing, and so distinct of the dying dolphin, as if his last thought was to impress you with the exquisite and varied tint, which, by change of motion, or at will, he could paint upon his scaly garments; the far-off ship, which, in the dim and shadowy distance, looks like a snow-flake, borne by the winds across the pathless prairie; the vapory clouds reminding you of the snow-white fleeces, which the hand of the shearer has piled up for the use of nations; and the gorgeous sunrise, the whole eastern circle of the sky, blazing with sparkling light, as from myriads of diamonds, to light up the pathway of the king of day. 'The romance of the sea,' how I wish I possessed the genius of him, whose glowing words threw around it a charm and a fascination, equalled only by the 'Old Mortality,' or 'The Heart of Mid Lothian.'

"The tall spires of the distant city, now tell to our delighted hearts that we are near our destined haven. With what thank-

ful hearts do we acknowledge the protection of Him, 'who ruleth the raging of the sea.'

"*Paris.*—How can I describe to you the feelings with which I approached this world-renowned city. And how little is it changed since you and I were dwelling here in our own home, to which father has just conducted me, upon the banks of the Seine. Too many and too touching were the associations connected with this spot, so dear to our hearts; too hallowed and mournful the memories which cluster around the home of earlier and happier years, to admit of words. Expressive silence was the more natural and appropriate speech, standing near the spot, where my infancy was cradled, and around it seemed to hover the angelic form of our sainted mother. But I will not dwell upon mournful themes, or gloomy recollections. The present is ours, the past has gone to make up the great record, which no mortal hand may efface, and which must pass the eye, and meet the decree, of Infinite wisdom.

I scarcely know where to begin in telling you what I have seen in this most fascinating city. But no place has seemed so attractive, and to which I have been bound by a spell almost irresistible, as the house, which was once our own. Father, without disclosing our names, was politely permitted by the present proprietor to go over the grounds, and, in the blandest manner, invited to enter the house and take some refreshment. As he was seated in a large, elegant old chair, his eye was suffused with tears, and so quickened were all his sensibilities, that he could not restrain the deep-drawn sigh, which told of the sore trials through which he had passed. The courtly bearing of him whose hospitalities we were receiving, would not permit him to intrude upon sorrows which appeared so deep and sacred. But father, with that ease and grace, for which he is so deservedly distinguished, at once accosted him.

"'I thought,' said he, 'that I had schooled my feelings, that

they were completely within my control. But when I found myself seated upon an old chair that had been handed down to me from my ancestors, and saw before me the venerated portrait of a distant kinsman, the emotions of my heart overpowered me. Pardon me, sir, for this intrusion upon the privacy of your house.'

"'Have I the honor,' said our host, 'of addressing one who is the favorite of the court, whose name and deeds will possess a power with our noble king—Monsieur Le Vicompte; if I am not mistaken, it will hereafter be a source of pride, as well as happiness, to know that Lefort has honored my house with his presence.'

"'You are too kind,' said Lefort, 'I have now neither wealth nor honors, but I still possess a loyal heart, full of admiration for our noble king and his brave followers.'

"'Do me the honor of making this house your home, Monsieur Le Vicompte. And permit me to assure you, I hold but as your trustee, all articles of taste or use, which were yours before the unhappy days of revolution.'

"This scene was more prolonged and touching, than I have described. It has lifted a load from the heart of father, assuring him of the estimation in which his services are held, and that his name and conduct are not forgotten amidst the throng, which now crowd the court of the monarch. To-day, I was, unwillingly, and to my great surprise, made the heroine in a scene of a most touching character. I had been walking in one of the streets of the faubourg St. Germain, and was lingering in the vicinity of the church of St. Sulpice, attracted thither by the crowds of ladies, who were on their way to mass. An elegant and dignified lady approached me, enveloped in a most rich, dark shawl, and her face hid beneath a long and costly veil. I thought she eyed me with no small degree of particularity, but I attributed it to my mode of dress, which then was entirely American. I was about

to pass her without further thought upon the incident, when she gracefully threw her veil from her face, and exclaimed, '*Mon Dieu!* is this an apparition? I seem to see before me the companion of my earliest and happiest years. Marie Lefort, from what region have you returned to gladden the eyes and the heart of the friend of your childhood? Pardon me, mademoiselle, but your face is the perfect image, the exact counterpart of one, who years since, was my dearest, most valued friend.'

"'I am indeed, Mademoiselle Lefort, a native of Paris, and I presume, am the daughter of her to whom you have referred.'

"With all the warmth, and *empressement*, so peculiar to the French, she folded me in her arms, and imprinted upon my cheeks kisses most warm and abundant. The next day she called upon us with her husband and daughter, and another scene, most intensely touching, was enacted at their meeting with father. They were old friends, together fled from the brutal attacks of the myrmidons of Robespierre and Danton, and have now been restored to all the wealth, and all the honors of which they have so long been deprived. The result of this interview has been a visit of a few days at the most charming home of the friends of my father Monsieur Casimir Perier and family. I cannot tell you how eagrely Monsieur Perier has entered upon the plans for the restitution of all that father has lost, and he can scarcely wait for the time to arrive, when he can see us presented to the courtly Charles. Was not this an incident most romantic and exciting, and will you be surprised when I tell you that I was so much overcome at my first meeting with Madame Perier, that her figure, and speech, and cordial welcome were before me during the succeeding hours of night, and drove sleep far from my pillow. I fear you will be fatigued, Louise, by the particularity with which I relate some of the daily occurrences which take place and fill up the hours of the day, so that I have scarcely time to recover from the effect of *one exciting* scene before another occurs, still more deeply novel *and interesting.*

CHAPTER LII

"Society.—I cannot tell you how charmed I am with the delightful reunions to which we are invited every evening. So brilliant, so sparkling with wit, and so overflowing with good humor is the conversation, the old *émigrés* full of vivacity and spirit, forgetting in the enjoyment of the present, all the trials and sorrows of the past; and the manners and the dress of the ladies, so distinguished for the ease and grace of the one, by the exquisite taste of the other. How is the really good society of Paris misconceived or misrepresented in America. There the men are spoken of as little better than a race of fops and coxcombs, and the ladies as heartless, light, and trifling. What would their defamers have thought had they been with me in the brilliant *salon* of the Duchesse de L. Never did I see such a galaxy of splendid personages. Here were assembled those who were most distinguished for their conversational powers, the poets, the artists, the *savans*, with a world renowned reputation, Madame de Staël and others, whom it would be invidious to speak of by name. There was no room or time for the idle dance, and but for a moment, did the sweet voice of song, or the entrancing strains of music interrupt the glowing wit, which, like the brilliant coruscations upon an evening sky, lighted up with dazzling flashes the topics of discussion.

"I confess I am sorry to see, however, an attempted change of the *ancien régime*. The Duke of Orleans, whom I greatly admire for his frank, agreeable manners, and the kindness which he manifests in all that concerns our family, at all his receptions

which he gives, and they are almost weekly, collects around himself the wealthy citizens of Paris, without regard to their intelligence or acquaintance with the decorum of society. The charm of the polished circle is thereby lost. In vain does he assemble in his salons, those who are graced with all the accomplishments and endowments of the very *élite* of the city, still it is a heterogeneous mass, with no tastes or feelings in common, and all retire from the gorgeous rooms tired and disgusted, and surprised at the want of tact in the noble Duke in the formation of his company. It is said that he has ambitious views, and that he is now courting that powerful party, made up of the wealthy citizens, at the head of whom is Monsieur Lafitte.

"I have just had a long and delightful conversation with the Duke of Orleans, or as he is more familiarly known in the United States, Louis Philippe. He had, he said, many very agreeable reminiscences of Louisiana, where he had made some most valued and cherished acquaintances. He spoke particularly of Monsieur B. M., a gentleman of fortune and education, a citizen of New Orleans. He remarked that he had been entertained by him in a most princely style, and with that large and generous hospitality so agreeable to the dispirited stranger. He said he was then an exile from his beloved France, and almost penniless in a foreign land. He spoke of the Cresent City with great admiration, and said he was astonished to find there, men of the various professions, who would take a high rank in any city of the civilized world. And he was especially complimentary in his comments upon the fair sex of our adopted country. I think he has, by his residence in the United States, become tinged in no small degree, with republican sentiments. He says he shall never forget the kindness which was extended to him while in America, and seems gratified by any opportunity of repaying the obligation. Let me describe to you the occasion and *place* of this conversation. Imagine yourself at a large party

given by the Duke of Orleans, and the elegant suite of apartments, in which were assembled the most beautiful ladies of Paris, poets and artists, and those most distinguished at the bar and in the cabinet. Professional musicians, as the fit might prompt them, sitting at the piano, and giving us strains of music most witching; in another corner those novelists, who have astonished the age by their unrivalled descriptions of men and manners, discussing some amusing topic, if you may judge from the incessant smiles, which are lighting up their handsome faces. While the Duke of Orleans has honored your sister by leading her to the magnificent picture gallery, conversing with me on his favorite subject the beauties of art, and as he stands before a magnificent painting, "Washington crossing the Delaware," invites me to a seat, and descants in most eloquent language upon our colonial and revolutionary history, and fixing his eye upon the noble form of "the Father of his country," remarks, that in vain will you look over all the annals of the past, to find so perfect, so true a type of humanity, as him who is now before us. Such simple dignity, such true heroism, such unmingled, disinterested patriotism. But I shall fail in any attempt to give you his expressions. Suffice it to say, that no man could be more eulogistic of the hero, or his country. And he remarked that he was not surprised that my father had sought a home in a land, which was destined to become as distinguished for the cultivation of the arts of peace, as it was for its free institutions. He hoped, however, that now, as he was restored to the position he had once enjoyed, and to the fortune, which had been wrested from him, he would decide to return to our beloved France.

I must defer any further accounts of my visits, and various promenades in the city, for instead of compressing it within the compass of a letter, I shall be giving you a volume of travels. But I shall have the pleasure, dear Louise, of furnishing you a more full, and minute account of the various and daily incidents,

which have afforded me so much pleasure during our brief stay in Paris, when again I shall have the pleasure of sitting once more, in our own quiet, lovely cottage, on the banks of the Teche. Dearer to me is Oak Lawn, more precious its associations, than the most gorgeous palace, which wealth or fashion has ever erected in this most wonderful, pleasure-loving city.

CHAPTER LIII.

"THESE old scenes and sights, dear Blanche, are so full of the recollections of the past, that at times I am quite unfitted for all exertion. I had no idea that these memories were so vital. I thought that time and absence had quite extinguished them. But they seem to merely have slept, and now awaking, with renewed strength, they place me on the old spot, with the same old emotions which quickened the pulsations of my heart many a long year ago. Some of the traces of Vandalism are here, yet I must confess I behold in the magnificent public works, which on all sides meet my eye, the wonder-working power of the genius and energy of Napoleon. But above all, I am right glad to see that your face wears an animation, which for years I have not seen there. I shall have received more than honors and estates by my visit to Paris, if the rose of health is restored to the cheek, the smile of happiness to the heart, of my dearly loved daughter."

"Oh, father, how ever kind is your pure and loving heart. I confess that since I put my foot upon the shore of my native land, new impulses are warming my heart, new visions are floating before my delighted imagination. Is it not true that there is a genius of the place,—a genius loci? It scarcely seems strange to me, that the beautiful superstition should have obtained among the ancients, that each place had its presiding divinity, that each person, at his birth, had his tutelary deity, locating his abode, guiding his footsteps along the devious paths of his journey, and guarding his person from the unseen and unnumbered dangers

which beset him. I seem to be greeted upon my return to the home of my childhood by some invisible influence. The old moss grown walls, the tesselated pavement even, has a voice of welcome, and I am happy."

"I dare not, dear Blanche, permit my own heart to dwell upon the old recollections, the delightful associations, of which every street is so full. We, of France, are a volatile people, but are proud, and passionately fond of our own native land. To a Frenchman, Paris is the world. Exiled from it, the wanderer whether surrounded by the gilded seductions of pleasure, or the pomp and pageantry of power, like Ulysses, ever sighs for the hour when he may return to his beloved Ithaca. I sometimes think I will persuade William to come with Louise and her sweet cherubs, and make our home once more in the land I love so warmly."

"We are neither of us, dear father, in a condition of mind to judge with any correctness," said Blanche. "I confess that there is a spell woven around my heart, that controls its every emotion. I seem to think that here all my toils are to end, that I am again to be the same laughing, happy, and joyous spirit, which, with its mischievous pranks, once so severely tried the kindness of your heart. How sweetly that music floats through the air from yonder brilliant *salon*, how fresh the happiness which beams from every face, the delight which glows in the graceful motion of that fair company. I must say that there is a poetry of life in Paris, peculiar to that charming city. I do not mean, as you see it in the gay and lovely circles, where pleasure holds his court, in the halls, where music is leading in its train, its enchanted votaries, or in the more decorated apartments, where the arts are displaying the unrivalled grace and beauty of sculpture and of painting; but in every scene, sombre or gay, in the careless frivolity of the laughing flower-girl, as in the busy marts of trade, everywhere, all around you, are, as it were, invested with the very light of life, *and* your spirit cannot be dark and melancholy."

"I suspect I should find in you, Blanche, a warm advocate in urging my dear children to join us here. Your enthusiasm is to the full as warm as my own, and if you are happy here, if discontent and disappointment are banished from all abodes in France, sure we had better decide upon making Paris our home. But I forget that to-morrow I am to be introduced, by my old friend, Casimir Pévier, to Charles X., and it is now late, and we shall be fortunate, if amidst all the excitement of scenes around us, we can find that repose and rest, so necessary and requisite in all the varied engagements before us."

On the following day Lefort was duly presented at court. He was received in the easy, elegant manner which so distinguished that unfortunate monarch.

"Every day," said the king, "brings new joy to my heart, and strength to the throne, in the return of those whose noble brows and lofty bearing were a standing rebuke to upstart authority, and which, therefore, expelled them from a country their valor had defended, and their talents adorned. M. Le Vicompte, we welcome you back to Paris."

"Your majesty will please accept the gratitude, which my emotions in this presence do not permit me to express. To see you, sire, upon the throne of your ancestors, the glory of our beloved France, the happiness of your people, all secure under your wise administration, is a happiness too great to find utterance. May you long be spared to your subjects. But I fear that I trespass upon that time, which is now so valuable, and hereby take my leave."

"No, no, a moment with my minister, M. Polignac, and you will then give us some account of your long absence from the home of your fathers."

Charles the X. with that warmth and generosity which so distinguished him, after signing some document prepared by his minister, informed Polignac that he had now before him an

affair of State, of pressing exigency, requiring immediate attention.

He introduced Lefort as one of the oldest supporters of the crown,—"Whose ancestry," said Charles, "in ages past, had received at the hands of royalty, the highest marks of distinction, and favor, for gallant services. He had," said the king, "distinguished himself by heroic deeds, in saving the royal family from ruffianly assaults, and submitted to great pecuniary losses, rather than sacrifice his royalty. It is our wish that his accounts, as prepared by himself, be taken as true, and at once, from our royal treasury, his losses be made up to him. From our own hand he will receive a sword, in lieu of that which he battered upon the mailed heads of armed bands who were ruthlessly assailing the venerable person of Louis XVIII."

Lefort was almost overwhelmed by this unexpected and noble conduct of the king. He was about to express his thanks for this most gratifying proof of kindness on the part of the monarch, but he gracefully waved him back, with the remark, "We are only discharging an obligation of the crown. Your gratitude is best expressed in the faithful loyalty, which preferred banishment, with loss of honors and estate, to wealth and favor, conferred by those, who had seized the reins of government."

Lefort, in as brief a manner as possible, informed the king of his residence in England, that upon a return to France, seeing no hope that power was to be restored to rightful hands, he preferred to take up his abode in that portion of America, once belonging to France, and which was most unwisely transferred to the United States. "The manner and language of the people," said he, "the very name of the State, endeared to me my new home, and in Louisiana I seemed to be dwelling in a colony belonging to my own beloved country. With great gratitude do they remember the aid and encouragement of France in their long and arduous struggle with England, and nobly when in their power, do they

requite that kindness, rendered them in the dark hour of their national history."

With many and warm assurances of his friendship, Charles received the parting adieus of Lefort, and told him from his long residence in America, he might render essential services to the country in the settlement of questions growing out of the Milan and Berlin decrees, the arbitrary acts of Napoleon.

"I am glad to see you safe returned, dear father. Soon after you left us, the Duke of Orleans sent in his card. I informed the attendant of your absence, he then inquired if Mademoiselle Lefort was in, and I dared not say no, so I had the honor of a presentation to that distinguished personage."

"Well, how did you like him?" said her father. "He is a man of great intelligence and interest, and in his early years was quite a favorite with your sex."

"I found him," replid Blanche, "exceedingly affable, full of anecdote, and so warm in his expressions of friendship and regard for you, that I was very much inclined to return his affectionate salute, as warmly as it was given. I wonder what our young ladies in America would say to such a reception? He was full of admiration of America, gave me a most interesting and graphic description of the retirement of Washington from office, and the inauguration of his successor. He remarked that he had never witnessed, nor in all history had he ever read, of so august and imposing a scene as the laying aside the robes of office by the great and good Washington, The placid dignity, which sat upon his noble brow, his commanding figure, the patriotism which beamed in his eye, and which manifested itself in all his conduct, made him appear the impersonation of true greatness. But I will not attempt a further description of this delightful interview. He bade me present to his old friend Monsieur le Vicompte, his warmest regards, and his regrets at your absence. He said that the arrival of the king and queen of Naples had induced him to

give a large fête, and he hoped it would be graced by the presence of his friend, my father, and his, shall I say it, charming daughter. The duchess and his daughters," he said, "would early make the acquaintance of your humble servant. I have so much to tell, dear father, that I forget that you might desire the privilege of saying a word yourself."

"I will be patient," said her father, "for I have so long a story to tell you, one which will interest you so much, that you will quite forget even the splendid fête, to which we are invited by Louis Philippe."

"Do tell me, dear father; I am all impatience to learn some account of your interview with Charles X. I hope the king was gracious. You have been so long absent from courts, so accustomed of late years to plain, simple, republican manners, that you must have felt a little strangely in the presence of such a stickler for etiquette, as Charles is represented."

"They do him injustice, my daughter. He is most courteous and affable in his address, and faultless in his manners. It said of him, that he is more the *gentilhomme* than the king. He, surely, can render a favor with more grace than any one else. But I anticipate. He received me in the most cordial manner possible, addressed me by my old title, and was most flattering in his remembrance of the poor services I had once rendered the crown. And now, my dear daughter, what think you? Without a word or a hint from me, of the losses and sacrifices which had fallen to my lot, in my adherence to the fortunes of the king, when his minister, the Prince de Polignac, arrived, and consulted with the king upon some important business of State, he introduced him to me in the most flattering manner. After showering compliments upon me, he spoke of my pecuniary losses, and directed that my own statement in regard to them should be received as correct, and the amount paid over immediately upon *my order*. Was not this done like a prince? I remembered the

time that I had vainly knocked at the door of the imperial government for the restoration of my property; how great now was the contrast! It was, as the king said, a right; my property had been unjustly confiscated, and yet, until now, I had no promise, even, that the wrong should be redressed."

"I cannot tell you, dear father, how happy you make me by this information; 'tis in part fulfillment of my dream of the happiness that was to await us upon this our return to our native country. You will hereafter feel so entirely at ease, and William can now devote himself to such pursuits as inclination or ambition might present, with no fears in regard to the future. How would the heart of dear Louise bound with rapture, could she now know the good fortune that awaits her."

"And she shall know it," said the father, "as soon as a letter can bear her the information. I shall at once transmit the whole of the amount paid me to be safely invested in the United States, far away from all danger from revolutions or change of government."

Each day was now crowded with occupation for our fair heroine. The very earliest dawn found her awake, and preparing for some pleasant promenade with her father. Old scenes were again to be visited; the great improvements which had been made in Paris—the arches, the bridges, the buildings, and the monuments, which the indomitable energy of Napoleon had caused to be erected—were to Lefort objects of the greatest interest. But few hours could be snatched from calls and visits, so wide was the circle of acquaintance of her father.

The old friends of Lefort had vied with each other in the magnificent fêtes which they had made for him and his daughter, who were objects of especial interest, not only from their high birth, but from the great vicissitudes which had marked their career. They could scarcely understand how it was that the family of Lefort could *give up* Paris, with all its attractions, the high posi-

tion offered him by the king, and all the advantages of wealth, for a home in the wilds of America. They listened to the beautiful descriptions of Blanche with the same feeling that they would have regarded the glowing pictures of a romance. In their estimation, one might as well be out of the world as out of Paris.

CHAPTER LIV.

LEFORT had now passed several months in Paris. His accomplished manners, his long residence in England and America, his early splendid career, caused his society to be sought with eagerness at the Château de St. Cloud.

Charles X. delighted to surround himself with those whom he had known in his earlier years, who had suffered with himself the pains of exile, through whose veins noble blood had coursed for ages past. He merely tolerated those who had won their badges of distinction with their swords; the military rank, though blazing with golden decorations conferred for brilliant services upon many a hard-fought field, was compelled to give place, in the eye of the king, to those hereditary titles, which dated back through long line of ages.

The acute, philosophical mind of Lefort, schooled as it had been by experience, by reflection, and by close study of history, perceived the dangers arising from dissentions, from heart-burnings, which were rife among even the loyalists that composed the court. He felt an instinctive dread of the power of the clergy. The king, with all his fondness for pleasure and show, was still a devotee. That the church should be restored to its ancient powerand splendor was the object, the burning desire of the Catholic priesthood.

The people, from long habit and under the splendid reign of the emperor, had looked with contempt upon the claims of the clergy, and saw in distinguished service only, any rightful title to honor and preferment.

There was too, at this time, a strong and powerful party, the *bourgeoisie*, men of great wealth and activity; affable in their manners, and favorites with the people. This party felt their pride stung by the decided preferences shown to the aristocracy by their monarch, and though they dreaded a revolution, the Duke of Orleans was with them an especial favorite, and gladly would they have seen him seated upon the throne. It required no prophet's eye to foresee the turbulence of these various factions, the insecurity of the present dynasty, and yet no prophet's tongue might tell that danger to the ear of a king, which had been deafened by flattery and servility.

With all parties was Lefort an especial favorite. The high favor of the king had secured for him the warm regard of all aristocratic circles, while the ease and affability of his demeanor, his long residence in republican America, rendered him an object of especial interest to all who were not permitted to bask in the sunshine of the court.

With that large, intelligent, and wealthy party who were irritated by the haughty demeanor of the army of priests, Lefort saw how great was the sympathy of the masses. It needed but a breath to fan into a flame the smouldering fires which should wrap in a wide-spread conflagration the throne, with all its gorgeous appendages.

"I wish, with all my heart, we were in our quiet home in America," said Mr. Lefort to his daughter.

"Why, what danger do you apprehend; or are you tired of the ceaseless calls made upon our curiosity or our civility?"

"I see no cause for immediate alarm," said her father, "none whatever for our personal safety. But, for the crown, it seems to me there is great and imminent peril."

"Why do you not, father, advise his majesty of your apprehensions? Surely he would listen with pleasure to suggestions from one of your great experience, the more so, as you are entirely dis-

interested. Do you not owe this to the generosity of Charles, to the safety of his people?"

"The very feeling, Blanche, of obligation, renders my position so unpleasant. I see the blow impending, and yet have no power to avert it. The king would listen with his very good nature to whatever I might say, yet would attribute my uneasiness to the trembling timidity of age. The counsels of no minister or friend are grateful to him, but those which tell him of the security of his throne and Empire."

"What cause can there be for apprehension?" asked Blanche. "No voice is raised in favor of the empire, and the most powerful party in France has most cause to dread a revolution. Charles is hardly seated upon the throne, with the consent of those who had overthrown the imperial government. Why should they wish his dethronement, the subversion of his empire, while they have scarcely given it an experiment?"

"You have not, Blanche, as I have, seen the uncertainty of power. You do not know the excitable character of the French people. They have tasted the fatal fruit of revolution. It required the iron will and arm of Napoleon to restrain them. And now they look with hungry eyes to the large estates centered in the nobility and the church, and upon any day or hour, armed bands may parade the streets, and deluge with blood the halls of the palaces."

"I hope, dear father, your fears may prove untrue. The terrible revolution you have witnessed, and your long quiet abode in your peaceful home in Louisiana, may, perhaps, have winged your imagination, and it has taken a flight to those scenes of horror depicted upon your memory, and thus created unnecessary alarm."

"Most devoutly do I hope so, yet my calmest judgment tells me of the dangers of the future."

CHAPTER LV.

LEFORT and Blanche had been invited to a grand *fête* given by the Duke of Orleans, to the king and queen of Naples. It was to be a most sumptuous and magnificent entertainment. The Palais Royal, with its immense apartments was to be crowded to its very dome, with the very *élite* of the most brilliant court in Europe. The evening arrived. All the avenues to the palace were crowded with the splendid equipages of those who were to grace the occasion. Thousands, arrayed in most superb and costly attire, were now enjoying the festivities of a scene, glittering with all the fascination which Paris even could afford.

The palace blazed with the light reflected from sparkling chandeliers, while softening rays from lamps suspended upon the trees in the gardens, and along the walks, gave an almost magical charm to the magnificently decorated apartments. Upon the fresh night breeze was borne the most delightful perfumes from the orange and rose, imparting an unexpected gratification for that gay and brilliant company.

The generosity of the duke, perhaps, some other consideration, appealing to the popular favor, or to keep himself, as his enemies declared, full in the eye of an excited influential public, induced him to throw open to thousands of spectators, those spacious grounds, that they might witness the magnificent display of elegance and fashion. He had lavished gold with an unsparing *hand, that* Frenchmen might see that he held his vast treasures as

naught, in comparison with the happiness they might confer upon his guests and friends.

The smile of joy brightened the fair cheek of beauty, the easy grace and elegant accomplishments of the high-born cavalier, lent a charm to the assembly. Powerful and influential from their great wealth, the liberals, the leaders of the *bourgeoisie*, were, in great numbers present. The king, contrary to the advice of his courtiers, had accepted the invitation of the son of Philip Egalité. At the announcement of the approach of the monarch, the duke hastened to receive his royal visitor.

Gracefully bowing low, "My noble liege," said the duke, "will accept the unfeigned gratitude and devotion of his most loyal subject, for this high proof of his regard. The smile of royalty will reflect a lustre upon this occasion, which will make its remembrance even a perpetual joy."

"Thanks for your courtesy, my noble duke," replied the king. "Aware of the presence of this goodly company, which your hospitality has here assembled, we could not deny ourself the pleasure of sharing in the general happiness. Will the duchess permit me the favor of her hand for the dance? The fair beauties which grace our realm, I see are impatient that it should commence."

Strains of music most sweet and inspiring, now floated through the halls, seconding the command of the pleasure-loving monarch. Enjoyment was at its highest. Not the most distant sign of danger marred the festivities of the hour.

Suddenly loud and boisterous shoutings were heard in the gardens. Those who had sought them for a promenade midst the delightful shades, as did the inmates of the palace, at first supposed that these sounds were but the outbursts of wild merriment on this festal night. But soon the general uproar was increased; lamps, with burning oil, were hurled over the gardens, and angry voices were uttering some fierce revolutionary sentiments.

So unexpected, so strange was the movement that many had not perceived it. Ladies at the windows, engaged in playful conversation, were suddenly assaulted by some rude and violent remark, while a grim, hideous face was thrust upon her, even when replying to the gallant words of her *vis-à-vis*.

Many were wild with affright. Consternation now expelled the rose from the cheek of beauty, while their gay cavaliers grasped the swords which were hanging as ornaments at their sides.

The firm voice of the duke was heard above all the din and uproar, inquiring what rude, mad violence takes advantage of the hospitality, which kindly threw open these palace gates, and would now mar the happiness of those, who have honored the Duke of Orleans by their presence here. "Fear not, fair ladies," said he, "cowardice, the most dastardly has wrought this mischief, and will quickly hide itself from observation. But that there may be no room for the slightest apprehension, troops have been ordered, and even now are stationed in the gardens."

Order and quiet was at once restored. Significant glances, however, were exchanged among the courtiers of the king, who had regarded, with stifled displeasure, the acceptance of the invitation of the duke.

"Why," whispered they, "were so many of the liberal, those who could dazzle the crowd by their wealth, summoned to this *fête?* Why was that Prince of the Bourse, M. Laffitte, treated with such marked attention by the duke? Mayhap he sees in the old age of our noble Charles, in his love of ease and pleasure, an unwillingness to fight for his crown, and that the liberals, who regard with such a deadly hate, the *noblesse* and the clergy, would gladly take the sceptre from the House of Bourbon, and entrust it to the keeping of the House of Orleans."

Such were the scarcely repressed remarks of many a haughty cavalier, who, though accepting the invitation of the duke, regarded him with feelings of unmeasured hostility. Others more

moderate, and more far-seeing, who were not blinded by their admiration for their king; who saw in the intense jealousy of the middling classes, their ill-concealed vexation at the favor with which the crown regarded the overbearing conduct and pretensions of the nobility, the haughty and high demands of the priests, the cause for this *émeute*. They had the manliness to free the duke from any shade of suspicion of exciting or countenancing a movement, which would be such a flagrant breach of hospitality.

But whatever might be the views or feelings of the various persons who graced that ball by their presence, it was in vain to attempt to restore the hilarity, which had been so inappropriately disturbed. Too many disagreeable reminiscences had been awakened; scenes similar to this, which had terminated in horrors indescribable, were fresh in the memories of many now present, and it was impossible to throw off the weight which rested upon their spirits. With kind adieus, and regrets kindly expressed, that this occurrence should have taken place, all now separated for their several homes.

CHAPTER LVI.

"I could not but admire the calm demeanor you displayed, dear Blanche," said her father, "last night at the *fête*, given by the Duke of Orleans."

"I saw no occasion, dear father," replied Blanche, "for the great terror which was not only depicted upon the faces of the ladies, but which blanched the countenance of many a cavalier, who, up to the moment of the confusion, by the haughtiness of his manner and address, would apparently have faced a battery, without the blenching of an eye. Pray, tell me, what was the occasion of the uproar?"

"It was much more serious than appeared to a spectator, who knew not how easily the populace of Paris may be aroused, and how deep is their hostility to many of the measures of the king. If I do not greatly mistake the signs of the times, the popular feeling, France is on the eve of a revolution."

"I heard it intimated," said Blanche, "by several of the nobility, that the Duke of Orleans fomented this revolutionary spirit among the people. Do you think so father?"

"I can scarcely answer your question," said Mr. Lefort. "The duke is a man of great wisdom and experience. He is not wanting in ambition. He knows full well the effect of certain measures, which the king, backed by the nobility and the clergy, are decided upon carrying out. If the king insists upon the ordinances, the days of his reign are ended. In that event, the Duke *of Orleans*, who was, at the time of the restoration, a favorite of

Laffitte, and of the influential party, of which he is leader, would be placed at the head of a liberal government. I have freely and frankly given my views to some of those, who seem most influential with the king; but though they listen with great politeness, I perceive my ideas are diametrically opposite to their own, and are little regarded."

"What are these ordinances against which so much popular fury is aroused?" said Blanche.

"They strike at the liberty of the press, and specially favor the nobility and the clergy," said her father. "They are obnoxious to great objection, but were they not, in the present temper of the public mind, it would be a fatal step, on the part of the monarch, to insist upon their passage. You now know my sentiments, and will readily perceive how near I think we are to a *coup d'état*."

"Why, then," said Blanche, "remain in France? It is well known that you have always favored the Bourbon line, and are now an especial favorite of Charles: you will become an object of the popular fury."

"I shall steer clear, as far as possible, of all political cabals," replied Mr. Lefort; "and soon, I hope, we may return to our adopted country. I would fain stay, that I might, if possible, arrest the blow, which I see impending over the head of a sovereign so kind as is Charles X."

During all this time, or rather for a few days past, there had been in Paris one who watched, with deepest interest, everything that concerned the safety of Blanche or her father. In that large and numerous assembly of more than three thousand persons, he was present, though he carefully concealed himself from observation. Our readers will at once suspect that the person indicated was none other than Charles Grafton. He had been solicited by his own government to proceed as a special messenger to France, and urge upon the attention of the king the final settlement of

those claims which were justly due from France to the citizens of the United States.

In that large concourse, unobserved, Charles Grafton had, after long years of separation, seen once more the peerless Blanche. Again had he listened to those rich, musical tones, that had sent a thrill through his very soul. He had remarked with what dignity she received the flattering attentions of those elegant, proud cavaliers, whose ancestry, for ages past, in the highest walks of life, had been distinguished.

"She is a little changed," said he to himself, "but for the better. There are the same expressive eyes, lighting up her lovely countenance with intelligence; the same brilliant complexion, the same ease and grace of manner, which at once won my love and admiration. She seemed as much at ease, when in conversation with the king, as if talking with an elegant gentleman in her own drawing-room, at Oak Lawn. How beautifully she described to him that charming spot, and with what *naïveté* she replied to the flattering compliments of the old monarch. How gracefully she spoke of the republican simplicity and undisturbed happiness which prevailed at their adopted home. And, then, with what singular felicity of expression, did she allude to the noble generosity of the king, now shown to the friends of his earlier years, whose long exile and whose sufferings were all now forgotten in the benignity of their prince. How touchingly did she remark, 'And our home, sire, thousands of miles hence, will wear a new smile, from the gracious, generous conduct which restored, unsolicited, the estates of my father.' And with what a modest gratitude she heard him reply, 'It was but a right,' and placing upon her hand a brilliant ring, 'wear this gem, my daughter, as a token of the high regard in which I shall ever hold the services of your father.'"

We will, with permission of our readers, for a moment retrace our steps upon this "owre true tale," and give some account of our

hero, whom we had necessarily left with his own occupations.

True to the affection which once had enthroned in his breast the image of her who had first awakened within him an almost hopeless, yet undying sentiment, Charles Grafton listened not to suggestions which would form for him an alliance that all might envy. Marriage he regarded as a source of the highest happiness, or the most unmingled bitterness. Mutual regard and mutual affection, a confidence which reposes the secrets of the innermost chamber of the soul, a love unblighted, true as the needle to the pole, were, in his estimation, absolute requisites for those who were to assume the vows and responsibilities of matrimony. Upon this subject, his feelings were morbidly sensitive. His delicate sense of honor, his high principle, was shocked at the unblushing "immoralities" which were rife even at our republican courts.

The snow-flake, whose purity would be marred, and whose beauty lost, by the blackening mote, was, to his mind, an emblem of woman's virtue. The polished steel, whose beauty and whose excellence a breath would tarnish and corrode, was the counterpart of man's fidelity. His sentiments were all true and exalted. Again and again had he asked himself, "How is it possible, that for Blanche my regard and interest has known no change; that to-day I love her with all the intensity which years ago prompted the most devoted attentions, and that in her bosom there should be no corresponding emotions?"

Charles had been surprised that she remained unmarried, after the rumors he had heard, and again and again determined he would learn her history from Burns. But, as is ever the case with men, in whose hearts are glowing a high sense of dignity, if not self-etseem, they would perish before they would reveal to each other those secrets, which they fully and freely disclose to the delicate ear of woman.

Just before the close of a session of Congress, Burns had received from home a letter from Louise, giving him a full account of the proposals on the part of Carneal to Blanche, the great anxiety she had felt, the hopes and fears of the father, and the final and most happy termination of the affair. She also informed him of the determination of her father to visit France with Blanche. Charles Grafton had called, preparatory to his leaving for Virginia.

CHAPTER LVII.

"WHAT, you do not depart from Washington before the close of the session?" said William Burns to Grafton.

"I think of it," said Grafton. "The Executive has kindly urged upon me a secret mission to Paris. He does me the great honor of attributing to me peculiar fitness for this service. At one time, you know, I had quite a passion for a knowledge of the French people and their politics, and have made myself familiar with the eventful history of that distinguished nation. And, to perfect myself, under the best masters, have acquired such familiarity with the language, that I converse as readily in French as in English."

"I have heard," said Burns, "Frenchmen say, that you spoke their language with the ease and elegance of a Parisian. But, if it is not a political secret, what induces the Executive to dispatch you to Paris?"

"The President says that this time seems to be propitious for a settlement of those vexatious questions growing out of the Berlin and Milan decrees; that our citizens, who have suffered from those orders, are clamorous for redress, and he greatly desires that every influence should be used with Charles X., to induce him to do justice in this matter."

"I am right glad you have mentioned this," said Burns; "and most heartily do I hope you will yield to the wishes of the President. Sure I am, no one could be selected whose qualifications so adapted him for this mission. I think you understand the wily

policy which obtains at the Court of France, and you nave the address requisite to cope with it. I have just learned, by letter from Mrs. Burns, that her father is on the eve of departure for France. He goes upon business, and you may mutually aid each other."

"Does he go alone, and how soon will he be in Paris?" said Grafton.

"His daughter Blanche will accompany him. She has suffered greatly from affliction, in the death of her mother, and her health demands, for its re-establishment, new scenes and new occupations. And her devotion to her father would not permit him to leave home alone for so long an absence. She is one of the noblest daughters that heaven ever vouchsafed to a parent."

"I have one request," said Grafton, "to make of you, Burns, and that is, that you will mention to no one that I am to leave America, and particularly to any member of your family. I will one day give you my reason. Perhaps it is hardly important to have spoken of it, but, for certain considerations, I especially desire that at present my departure should remain a secret from any one."

How did the heart of Grafton glow with the desire to make those definite inquiries of Burns, concerning Blanche, which were so interesting to him. Her health was suffering, the loss of a mother so worthy of her love, and affectionate remembrance, might well prompt that depressing sorrow, which was undermining her constitution. All my past, so far as it regards my connection with her, seems to be a riddle. I left her a few years since—they seem an age—a most lovely and fascinating being, full of animation, and joy, not a cloud resting upon her fair brow, her heart overflowing with the noblest impulses. I have heard of her passing through scenes of trial and distress with the calm courage of coldest philosophy, and ministering to the sorrows of others, with the sweet smile, and open hand of angelic nature, and at this

time her own spirits are prostrated beneath a blow, which all the influences of her own fine intellect must fail her to avert. And now that I know, in some degree at least, the strength of her affections, the sweetness of her disposition, that constancy and truth are with her prominent characteristics, it does seem strange to me that she should have permitted me to indulge the delightful hope, of one day winning her, a hope that she must, from her wonderful perception of the human heart, have known, was with me so bright in its anticipations.

And yet may there not be some mistake, some misapprehension? The letter of her father surely was sufficiently explicit, but may not some false and idle report in regard to my own conduct, have induced it, or may not she have been impelled by others to have consented that that letter should have been written. Might it not have been dispatched without her knowledge even, under the expectation that she was about to marry according to the inclinations of her relatives. She is not now married, and if her faith was plighted to another, surely he would accompany her upon this perilous journey. Never had I expected to see her again; the very idea of going to Louisiana, associated with that region is so much of wretchedness, and learning from her lips that she could not be mine, would be the sublimation of woe. It seems almost Providential, that at the same time we should be going to a far distant city, and almost necessarily thrown together, from similar objects in our visit. With what diligence will I scan her feelings, if chance should bring about a meeting. Gladly would I, unobserved by her, meet her at some large assemblage, and discover, if possible, the workings of her heart. Intensely would I study her every act, the expression of her speaking countenance, her conduct when surrounded by the glitter of wealth and fashion, and by the revealings of her exterior being, learn, if it were possible, what might be the thoughts and feelings which prompted them.

Surely that eye, so expressive of the workings of her mind, will tell through my vision some of the secrets, which may be buried in her soul. Words cannot express the happiness, which the thought of meeting Blanche imparts. Once more to be near her, to look upon that lovely face will be a joy, which for years I have not known. And if it should be in my power, by any means, to further the objects, for which they go to Paris, great will be my gratification. But I will dream no longer; these airy speculations would better become some more youthful fancy.

Such were the thoughts crowding the mind of Grafton, and he fancied himself in the gayest metropolis of the world. Ambitious as he was, and desirous of successfully accomplishing the object of his mission, pleasant as was the thought of visiting a city so renowned, and so full of interest, there was in his mind an image so bright, one scene so deeply engaging, that little room was found there for other considerations.

CHAPTER LVIII.

CHARLES GRAFTON had now been for some time in Paris. So fluctuating was the conduct of the ministry of the king, such plots and counterplots on the part of those who regarded with hostility the reigning dynasty, and those whose interests were promoted in sustaining it, so unsettled, indeed, were all the measures of the government, that Grafton made but little progress in the object of his embassy. The old king, charmed by the elegant manners and ready powers of mind, which distinguished the representative of America, flattered by that insinuating address, which appealed to his justice and magnanimity to redress the wrongs occasioned by the unjust decrees of a military dictator, and which were a blot upon the fair escutcheon of the earliest friend and ally of the United States, readily promised that prompt and full indemnification should be made. But on the morrow new influences would step in to hinder the accomplishment of his promise, and like most governmental difficulties, was shoved aside by astute ministers, inasmuch as the policy of action was somewhat questionable.

With the ministry, Grafton put on a haughtier manner, and assured them, that grateful as his country felt for the early kindness extended by theirs in the hour of peril, and averse as she would be to coercive measures, that as the claim was on all hands acknowledged to be just, a large and influential party in the United States insisted upon reprisals, if France should be longer deaf to the voice of justice and right. These views, though expressed with extreme prudence and caution, were wounding to the pride

of the nation, but critical as was the condition of France, from internal dissensions, so menacing was a revolution, that such a course of conduct, on the part of Grafton, had great weight in calling immediate attention to this claim presented by him for adjustment. But all his hopes and expectations were doomed to be frustrated by an event which had occurred sooner than the most sanguine hostility to the king had anticipated.

The public journals were loud and violent in their appeals against the tyranny which sought to muzzle them by new ordinances. A few young men, full of the fire of enthusiasm, were making an occasional harangue, while some half-besotted workmen threw stones at the carriage of M. de Polignac. Such was the commencement of an insurrection that was leading with hurried steps to revolution.

The timid were aroused, and emboldened by being assured that they had already committed themselves, and that their punishment was inevitable. The madness, the fatal mistakes of the king and his ministers, in first despising the outbreak, and then, in the measures adopted to put it down, hurried on the terrible catastrophe. All the horrors of a civil war were now felt in Paris. Blood flowed in the streets in torrents. The leader of the royal troops, knowing that the ordinances which they esteemed illegal, and unjust, had occasioned the rising of the people, hesitated to fire upon them, and did it but in strict self-defence.

But we will not trench upon the province of history in alluding to the revolution, which deposed Charles X., when as yet he was scarcely seated upon his throne, but only touch upon it, as it deeply affected the future of the hero and heroine of our tale.

Lefort had accompanied some of his earlier and strongest friends in a visit to the king, to urge upon him a change of measures. They assured him that the danger was most imminent, that he was deceived by those courtiers, who, from ignorance or pusillanimity, were flattering him with assurances of his security. A

loud and popular outbreak was heard at the doors even of the palace; cries that the people were being murdered by foreign mercenaries, and that the king and his courtiers were hostile to the best interests of France, rang through those vaulted chambers.

The populace were now madly, and in great numbers, rushing to the château of the king, and some were clamoring for his head. Not the head of Charles only, but the heads of his ministers and advisers, shouted others. Darkness was lending horror and terror to those dreadful scenes.

Calmly and courageously was Lefort engaged, in counselling the intruders to pacific measures, appealing to the gallantry of the French, and asking if men would be so cowardly, as to strike at the honored person of an unarmed king and his family.

At this moment, a brawny, giant arm was raised holding an axe, and the life of the gallant Lefort would in a moment more have been sacrificed, when his assailant felt himself in the powerful grasp of Charles Grafton. Hurling the ruffian to the ground, and by the energy of his tone and manner, his manly form swelling with the excitement of the occasion, the crowd involuntarily opened a way, through which he led the father of her, whom he so idolized. So imminent was the peril, so unexpected the deliverance, that for the moment, Lefort was struck dumb with astonishment. The noise and confusion of contending factions in the streets, armed companies of soldiers vainly endeavoring to resist the progress of desperate citizens, the firing from the windows of the houses, the groans of the wounded mingling with the shouts of the leaders of the rebellion, so impeded the movements of Lefort and his rescuer, that no opportunity was afforded for explanation. Hurrying on, at last they reached the hotel, where almost wild with affright, Blanche was lamenting the absence of her father, exposed, as she feared he was, to the most fearful danger. Amazement sealed her lips; she could only look her gratitude through brimful eyes, when Lefort broke the silence.

"You have to thank the energy and courage of Mr. Grafton, Blanche, that you have now a father. But for him, a brutal hand, armed with a deadly axe, would have dealt a fatal blow upon my defenceless head."

In vain did Blanche essay to restrain the emotions of her heart, that she might express her thanks. The surprise of this meeting, so unlooked for, so unexpected, that the idol of her soul should thus appear as the deliverer of her father, the love that glowed in that face so dear to her, all too powerfully affected her shattered strength, and she fell fainting into the arms of Grafton.

CHAPTER LIX.

Upon the recovery of Blanche, Grafton was about to retire to his own lodgings. He was fascinated, spell-bound; yet delicacy, he thought, required that, situated as he was, or supposed himself to be, with the family of Lefort, he should take his leave. Blanche had now found words to express her grateful sense of the kindness, never to be forgotten, of one of their earliest friends. Mr. Lefort insisted that Charles should remain where he was.

"At this time of night, it would be madness in you to seek your lodgings. The streets, full of rioters, and of those who seek to expiate, by the blood of some man of distinction, the loss of one of their fellows. I pray you," said Mr. Lefort, "add to the obligation we are already under to you, Mr. Grafton, by remaining at our hotel, at least until the morrow."

"Will you permit me, Mr. Grafton, to second my father's wish. Perhaps it may appear not a little selfish, but I think it behoves us to do what we can to save the lives of our defenders. In times like these, we know not the value of the strong arm and the strong heart; and in such perils, age and our sex are privileged to call upon those, whose courage and whose powers render such condition safe and happy."

"I am the proudest cavalier in Paris, Miss Lefort, to be summoned upon this service, and, with great pleasure, shall accept your father's invitation," said Grafton.

"You have not been long in Paris, Mr. Grafton?" said Lefort,

"your visit is somewhat inopportune, if pleasure was your object."

"I came on especial business, under the orders of our government; just at the time my hopes of success were brightest, this wild, revolutionary spirit must appear to mar all my prospects. I have written to the Cabinet at Washington, informing them of the untoward circumstances, and that nothing more can be done, at least for the present."

"Will you remain any length of time in Paris?" said Lefort.

"But a few days," replied Grafton. "I will await events, and if the king should be dethroned, I shall go to London, and shortly take passage for the United States."

"Had Mr. Burns left Washington before your departure?" inquired Blanche.

"Congress was to have adjourned in a few days," replied Grafton, "but I did not hear from him, as I expected, before I took passage in New York for Havre."

"Did he tell you that we were to be in Paris?" said Blanche.

"He did; and I inquired you out a few days since," replied Grafton.

Grafton was now seated near Blanche, and engaged in conversation, while Lefort was reading his letters from America, and some exciting articles in the public journals.

"You seem surprised," said Grafton to Blanche, "that I did not call and see you immediately upon my arrival. Again and again have I seen you upon your balcony, and at the splendid *fête* given by the Duke of Orleans, I had the pleasure of seeing and hearing you."

"Why, Mr. Grafton, did you not speak to us?" said Blanche. "What cause can there be for conduct to me so unaccountable?"

"Strange! unaccountable?" said Grafton.

"Yes, perfectly beyond all power on my part to understand," said Blanche. "A few years since, you left us in Louisiana for a

residence in Virginia. The gallant speeches you, from time to time, made me, I came to regard as unmeaning compliments. But I thought we were at least friends, and that we might have some place in your remembrance. Long years have passed away, and though, at times I believe, you inquired for my sister, Mrs. Burns, not one word have you deigned for others of the family, who had regarded you with, at least equal interest."

"Miss Lefort, you surprise me," said Grafton. "Do you not know the cause of that protracted silence? Are you not aware of the bitter disappointments which I have been forced to suffer?"

"I pray you tell me to what do you refer," said Blanche. "I ask no confidence, but reveal to me, Mr. Grafton, how, if in any way, I am connected with it?"

"Miss Lefort, has not your father informed you that years since —no—will you have the kindness to read these letters, and then ask me, what connection you have with an event that has embittered my whole existence?"

Charles now handed Blanche the letter he had written her father, which had been inclosed with the reply and forwarded to him. The beautiful hand of Blanche trembled like an aspen, and her bosom heaved with violent emotion, as she slowly and deliberately perused the letters before her. "Can it be! oh, can it be?" she exclaimed, as her large blue eyes were raised, "that my dear sainted mother knew of these transactions! I, who had made her my confidant, who had poured into her warm, affectionate bosom the bitter story of my anguished heart—oh! I will not, cannot believe that she could have known the existence of these letters. And my father, whom I have so fondly loved, how could he have received and replied to a letter, which involved my whole happiness, nay, almost life itself, and have not said a word to her, who would have died to save him? Permit me, Mr. Grafton, to seek

for a time the privacy of my chamber, for I have not, this moment, the power of controlling my feelings."

Lefort had heard the last remark, and was about to follow Blanche, when she said: "Even you, dear father, will excuse me, if I ask the favor of exclusion from every eye, but that of Heaven."

"Now tell me, Mr. Grafton, what disclosures have you made that has occasioned such agitation in my daughter," said Mr. Lefort. "Have you had news from America? Those letters, they have the postmark of Louisiana. *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* some afflictive news from William Burns."

"Pardon me, Mr. Lefort, I have none but good news from America," said Grafton. "These are old letters. I felt obliged to exhibit them to your daughter, to account for my conduct."

CHAPTER LX.

Conflicting now were the emotions, which violently stirred the heart of Blanche. Again and again, in the secrecy of her own reflections, had she imputed to her lover a cruel frivolity, a trifling with her feelings, deeply degrading to him in her own estimation. And my mother, though a most sensitive pride had closed her lips, must have looked upon the conduct of Charles as trifling, and derogatory to the character of a man of honor. How bitter, too, have been the ill-concealed expressions of animosity, which have at times been lurking upon the lips of Louise. And until William met him at Washington, even the friendship which he had manifested, had cooled into indifference. I now see through the mystery of that remark of his on his return from Congress, which I overheard him making to Louise, "that Grafton's conduct was perfectly inexplicable, that there was about him a nobility of soul, a warmth and wealth of friendship, that he had never seen in any one, and though he was flattered and caressed in society, and highly complimented, as a most successful public speaker, he ever seemed a disappointed man, and any allusion of mine to our family would darken his animated countenance, and nothing would rouse him from deepest depression." And when I asked him, why he had not called to see me, the sorrows of a lifetime seemed rolled upon his heart, while his eloquent tongue in vain essayed to give utterance to his feelings.

Such were the stirring reflections of Blanche, while alone she pondered upon the disclosures which those letters opened upon her *understanding*. But we must return to her father, who was

equally astonished by the letters now in his turn offered for perusal. "Am I dreaming?" said Lefort to himself. "This," looking at the reply to the letter of Grafton, "seems to be my handwriting, and yet till now I never saw the letter, calling for such an answer! Oh, it is a vile forgery, and who could have perpetrated so foul a fraud! What object, what motive, what opportunity could any one have had for the accomplishment of so infamous an act! How much talent. The writer seems to have my mode of thought and expression! I dare not suspect any one, for who could have so successfully managed this stupendous imposition, but one who was on the most intimate terms with myself and family.

Amazement and wonder had taken possession of the mind of Grafton. "Could I have been mistaken? Again and again without suspicion of its genuineness had I read that letter, which struck dead all my hopes and prospects of happiness. The conduct of Burns would have confirmed me in the gloomy expectation, that I could not hope for the favor of Blanche, for he never spoke of her, scarcely alluded to her or her father during our constant and intimate intercourse at Washington. Indeed, there was a studied effort on his part, apparently, to avoid a conversation upon any subject, which might touch upon the relations, which he must have known existed between Blanche and myself."

"Mr. Grafton," said Lefort, "will you believe me when I say "——

"Stay, Mr. Lefort, could you suspect that I would doubt your honor or your truth. But in what a mystery are we involved."

"You must permit me, Mr. Grafton, to assure you, that this night, for the first time in my life, have I ever seen these letters, or suspected even that they had existence. I am as completely in the dark in regard to this whole transaction as you or any one possibly can be."

"I have no doubt of it," said Grafton. "Will you allow me *the time*, sir, where there can be no mistake, to say, that from the

day when that letter was written, aye, from the hour of my departure from Louisiana, I have never, for one moment, ceased to love your daughter with a warmth that can never change. Will you permit me now to renew the request, contained in that letter, that I may try to win the hand and heart of the incomparable Blanche?"

"The partiality you have expressed for my daughter," said Lefort, "has my most hearty approval, and I rejoice that there can be no opportunity for evil design to thwart your purposes. But I will not longer suffer dear Blanche to rest under the delusion that I could ever have acted the part which she must have supposed. You will please excuse me for a few moments, that I may make the explanations, with which she ought before this to have been made acquainted."

Lefort hurried to the apartment of his daughter. Blanche rushed to the arms of her father. "Forgive me, those expressions," said she, "which, in an unguarded moment, and in the fullness of my disappointment, fell from my lips. I doubt not your conduct, though to me inscrutable, was dictated by the best and purest motives."

"Dear Blanche," said her father, "I have nothing to forgive, and no forgiveness to ask at your hands. You saw these letters before they ever met my eye."

"Why father, what do you mean? Are you beside yourself, that you can say that the letter of Charles Grafton was submitted to me before you replied to it."

"I said no such thing, my daughter. I never saw those letters until they were handed me, this night, by Grafton. No, it was a most wicked conspiracy, and successfully has the villainy been accomplished."

"You amaze me, father. How unpleasantly are we placed; while we are obliged to disclose to him the falsehood of that pro-

ceeding. I really know not how to escape from an explanation."

"The noble heart of Charles," said her father, "has s that difficulty. He has begged me to permit him t the offer made in that letter."

"And what did you tell him, father?"

"What my heart prompted," said Mr. Lefort. "I c wait to consult with you, but frankly assured him that h sals received my entire approbation. And if from the sk successful manner with which you conducted the affair neal, I may augur what may be the result of your with Mr. Grafton, I should feel but slight apprehensio consequences of an interview."

"That, dear father, was an affair of the head, and n heart. But we must not longer keep Mr. Grafton wai return."

CHAPTER LXI.

LEFORT and Blanche now returned to the drawing-room, where Grafton was intently reflecting upon the strange events of the past, attempting to unravel the tangled web, which mischief had woven so artfully. The long, dreary night of the past, even when the hour seemed darkest and dreariest, was now breaking away in the dawning of the morning, when the mists of treachery and falsehood were to flee away before the bright sunlight of truth. The fears, the griefs of the past were all swallowed up in the hopes and joys of the present. Doubt and apprehension were banished from his mind, and his clear, bright intellect saw in the open, generous reply of Mr. Lefort, in the frank and fearless demeanor of Blanche, that the encouragement she had years ago given him in Louisiana, was the offspring of a regard, which time and circumstance had only served to ripen. A happiness, which for years had been a stranger to his bosom, now lighted up his handsome features with an expression, which, to one heart at least, was inexpressibly beautiful. Mr. Lefort purposely, and before a word was exchanged between these sorely tried lovers, had sought his own apartment.

"Oh! how am I repaid, dear Blanche, for the agony of years, by the joy with which I read your permission, to tell you of my love. Bitter as was the disappointment, which fell upon my heart, when I received the inclosure, which you have just read, never did I cease to regard you with the deepest interest. And when I learned that you were not, as that horrid letter intimated, another's, my heart would look with hope to the future. May

I not now, dear Blanche, claim the fulfillment of the half expressed promise you gave me, when I bade you adieu at Oak Lawn?"

"I will be as frank as your affection and constancy merits. More than a half promise did I give you years since in Louisiana. There was then no coquetry in my heart, nor did I intend that it should appear in my manner. Your love was then, and is now, fully reciprocated. I am, and will be yours for ever."

Hours flew away on golden wing, while Charles and Blanche dwelt upon the incidents of the past. The subject which most deeply interested her was the successful result of his favorite project with his slaves, which he had removed from Louisiana, and who were now happy, contented, and prosperous in their various avocations. The heart of Charles throbbed with emotion as he listened to the account which Blanche gave him of the terrible pestilence which visited the neighborhood of Oak Lawn, an account of which we have attempted to lay before our readers. But the relation which was most interesting to him, which was the key-note in all that music of the soul, was that of the affair between herself and Mr. Carneal.

"I would not have mentioned this," said Blanche, "had it been known only to Mr. Carneal and myself; for I think it is a secret which honor confides to the keeping of a lady. But with us there should be no concealment, and I preferred you should learn whatever might probably interest you, from myself."

"How did you refuse him?" said Grafton, "and still retain his friendship. The deep interests of your father and brother, apparently involved in your management of this affair, I should have supposed, would have induced a different termination."

"Had I consulted my own feelings only," said Blanche, "so vital to the happiness of my father's future seemed my acceptance of Mr. Carneal, I might have yielded my assent. But do not be vain," she laughingly remarked—"a certain gentleman in Virginia *had run* away with my heart, and honesty bade me tell Mr.

Carneal, when he asked for it, that I had none to give him. Like a sensible man, he accepted the excuse offered for declining his liberal proposition, and in return for so frank a disclosure, he has promised me unceasing friendship."

CHAPTER LXII.

"I CAN scarcely realize," said Blanche, "the truth of the present scene. I have almost feared, dear Charles, that I shall awake from the joy of this present hour, and find that I have been in a land of delightful dreams."

"I had little hope," responded Charles Grafton, "that when I was offered the mission to France by our President, that it was to be to me a source of such unmingled joy. At first, I thought of declining it, as my friends wished me not to diverge from the path of political life, in which they were kind enough to say I was somewhat successful."

"Oh! the same angel voice whispered to your ear," said Blanche, "which dispelled all my forebodings upon leaving Côte Blanche, and assured me that here I should find that happiness, which had so long been a stranger to my heart."

"I fain would believe it, Blanche, for although the hope of wining your love, and calling you my own, had long since ceased to have a lodgment in my heart, when your brother-in-law, Mr. Burns, told me that you and your father were to be in Paris, some mysterious voice whispered to my stricken spirit, that we should meet, that some explanation of that cruel letter would take place, and yet I scarcely dared to hope, so sudden, so violent, and unexpected had been the blow which had prostrated in the dust all my hopes of that bliss, which you had permitted me to anticipate when I left you in Louisiana."

"If the disappointment was so severe," said Blanche, "I am surprised that you should have made no further inquiries concerning

me. You saw William Burns daily, were upon terms of the most intimate footing; it seems strange to me that you never have alluded to the subject."

"Pride, dear Blanche, shut my lips. On more than one occasion I was about to speak to Burns of you, but whenever I approached that sentiment, which was ever uppermost in my thoughts, he seemed to me to put on a cool reserve that at once stifled all inquiry."

"William and yourself," replied Blanche, "both unconsciously were influenced by the same feeling. I knew, without his telling me, that he felt a deep resentment at one time, at what he considered trifling, upon your part, with the affections of a beloved sister. And he would conceal from you a secret, which I had permitted no one to know from my lips, whatever they might suspect from the effect which it was producing upon my spirits and conduct."

"We are both now satisfied that with us there was no wrong, no want of affection, or interest," said Charles, "but, dear Blanche, there are in my mind some suspicions, which awaken most painful reflections, and as discussion can now avail nothing, or tend to any useful result, I hope we may never allude again to this subject. Let me say, however, although I hardly consider it necessary, that so far as yourself or family are concerned, I have no possible cause for complaint, and know that one and all have been actuated by a high sense of honor and principle."

"I agree with you Charles. We do not doubt the truth and constancy of each other. Other agencies have worked our disappointments and trials, and as they have all eventuated for good, we will not sadden the present by dwelling upon the past."

Charles Grafton had most unwillingly discovered the true source of the troubles which had fallen upon the pathway of Blanche and himself. He had learned from the lips of one he loved, of the almost complete seclusion from society, which she had maintained, when she learned the false, yet fatal information

that he was affianced to another. She had unfolded to him the secrets of her soul with a frankness and fullness that her maidenly modesty would not permit her to employ, even when confiding to the affectionate and sympathizing heart of her mother, the grief, that was planting her pillow with thorns, and blighting the bloom, which rosy health had painted upon her cheek. From her he had learned that so deep, so abiding was her melancholy, that had not heaven opened a door for her to occupations, which tasked all the energies of her mind, and of her physical frame, and at the same time called for the exercise of all her sympathy, had she not been incessantly engaged in alleviating the distress, and soothing the sorrows of others, her own health of body and of mind, would, by her disappointment, have been prostrated beyond all power of recovery.

And mine, said he to himself, was a similar grief, and palliated and concealed by the same devices—incessant occupation of the mind, placing myself in such situations, that defeat and disgrace must follow my efforts, if for a moment I yielded to the despondency occasioned by the frustration of hopes, most dear and cherished. Hers, however, were employments, demanding self-sacrifices, with no voice of loud acclaim speaking to her heart, and gratifying an innate principle of ambition; and yet who can say that the sweet whispers of an approving conscience did not bring a far higher satisfaction, than the wild, tumultuous plaudits of those, who may for a moment be charmed and excited by a display of eloquence.

How admirably adapted, however, were these duties and trials for the development of the strength of character, and the growth of lofty, elevated, and generous principles. Had Blanche accepted the offered heart, or permitted an expression of the love which so warmly glowed in my bosom, ere I left her home in Louisiana, how different would have been the position which I should occupy *in life.* I should, in all probability, have sought ease and pleasure

in tne calm, quiet life of a planter, unaffected by the promises held out by political life, regardless of the distinction which waits upon toil and exertion in those walks of life, so adapted to attract the admiration and applause of the world.

And how has the character of Blanche been matured and beautified by the severe discipline and training to which she has been subjected. What useful lessons has she learned. What varied conditions of human existence has she witnessed, and as her own bruised spirit has been healed by the miseries which she has seen and remedied, she has exemplified the truth of the sentiment of the poet:

> "Taught by that Power which pities me,
> I learn to pity them."

Such are "the uses of adversity," such are the wise and salutary inculcations of the stern and hard trials to which humanity is subjected, that it may be fitted for the discharge of the high duties imposed upon it here, and for a happier and more blessed condition, when "this mortal shall put on immortality."

CHAPTER LXIII.

Day after day succeeded each other, and the excitement with the populace of Paris hourly increased. The season for compromise, for submission even, on the part of the king of France, had gone by. Nothing but an abdication would satisfy the leaders of the revolutionary party, and the government of Charles X. was overthrown. The House of Bourbon had lost all prestige. Those who had excited and fostered the rebellion, knew that their only safety was the extinction of that dynasty. Grafton soon perceived that some time would elapse before a regular government would be established, and that the present was most unpropitious for accomplishing the purposes of his mission; any further delay was useless, and he accordingly determined upon an immediate departure from Paris.

While he felt the futility of a longer stay, for himself, he considered it extremely hazardous, on the part of Mr. Lefort, to remain longer in France. He was known to be an especial favorite of Charles X., and from early association, as well as principle, to be in favor of the Bourbon race. In the excitement of men's passions, full of suspicion, and doubtful of their own security, they had little toleration for those who opposed them.

"I have little or no hope, Mr. Lefort," said Grafton, "of beneficial action with the government of France, in my present capacity, and have concluded to leave soon for the United States. It is important that I should be at Washington as early as possible. Blanche has promised to fix our wedding-day immediately upon *her arrival* at Oak Lawn. I could wish, if it meets your approval,

that we set out at once for London, and after a few weeks' stay there, we leave for Louisiana."

"Most willingly do I accede to your wishes in this respect," said Lefort. "I long for the quiet happiness of Oak Lawn. Would to heaven that I could in some way serve the interests of the unfortunate, but noble Charles. It is now too late. The friends of the Duke of Orleans, and from their wealth and intelligence they are all-powerful, have determined upon the dethronement of the king, and the accession of Louis Philippe to power. The struggle is not yet over; it will be fierce and bloody, and prudence demands that we should bid adieu to Paris."

On the following day, Grafton obtained for himself and Mr. Lefort the necessary passports, and at once set off for Havre, that they might take passage for England.

CHAPTER LXIV.

"I WILL still continue some account of our every-day life, the events which mark it, the new sights which greet our eyes, and the sounds which gratify our ears, as they may afford you relief or pleasure during the long hours of evening, when the gay and charming prattle of the children is hushed in sweet repose. We have bid a final adieu to Paris, endeared to us by so many delightful associations. How desirable would life be here, how would I urge dear father to return, and make his home once more in the land of his nativity, amidst the scenes he loves so well, and amongst a people, dear to him beyond expression, were it not for the singular fickleness of its whole population. Instability is written upon all its institutions. Insecurity for life or property deprives you of all prospect of permanent peace. The gay and pleasure-loving Frenchman throws aside the weeds of woe that he had put on for those who had fallen during the revolution, and now dances at the *fêtes* given by men who had filled Paris with mourning in the overthrow of the latest dynasty.

"But for these constant and frightful vicissitudes, father would decide upon an abandonment of his home across the Atlantic. Here are his old *confrères* in the cabinet and in the field, men with whom he battled for his king, and whom he followed in a long and weary exile, when the clouds of adversity hung over the fallen fortunes of the house of Bourbon.

"They prefer a residence in France, even amidst the greatest dangers and terrible uncertainties, and father says it sometimes seems *to him* to savor of cowardice to desert the cause of one so noble

and generous as Charles X. has proved himself to be. And then, he replies, that he has but a few more years to give to any cause, and they are broken by disappointments and trials, and that he is little fitted for times which require not only stout hearts, but the stout and vigorous arm of manhood, in its strength and manliness, to withstand the revolutionary spirit. A second Æneas, he bids a most unwilling farewell to the hills and valleys in the sight of which the happiest years of his life were passed, and to the stream endeared to him by so many and charming associations, upon the banks of which his own dwelling-place reared its graceful architecture. He has gathered up with pious care many precious mementoes of his native land. He has employed the cunning hand of the most celebrated limner to throw upon the canvass those speaking colors, which will remind him of scenes so precious to his heart.

"Oak Lawn will be decorated with those life-like pictures, which will almost transport one from its quiet retreat to the busy and gay metropolis, which we part with so unwillingly, and the marble bust shall, even in that far distant land, keep alive and fresh our gratitude and regard for the noble, generous, but unfortunate Charles X.

"*London.*—We have decided upon a short stay in this 'world in miniature.' And I am not a little rejoiced that we at last receive some rest from the incessant demands, which society, for a few weeks past, has made upon us. It almost seems a contradiction in terms to speak of quiet amidst all the noise and bustle of the largest city in the world. But in the nice snug parlor of our pleasant inn, I feel as secluded and as private as if seated beneath the branches of the tall magnolia, whose rich, umbrageous foliage now shields you from the rays of a burning sun.

"I should make too large a demand upon your time and patience, to attempt a description of a tithe of the magnificent sights, which daily delight us in this wonderful city. We start out at early

morn, and after spending a day most delightfully, we come home at night, feeling we have accomplished but little, in viewing the marvellous exhibitions of the wealth and genius of the world's great metropolis. I fear you will think me devoid of all romance, or touched with a feeling of pensiveness, when I tell you that no single spot has interested me more than Westminster Abbey. The last resting-place of so much talent and genius, and courage, the philosopher, the poet, the moralist, and he who won his laurels upon the battle-field, or standing on the deck of a noble frigate, warring for the honor of the flag which was proudly floating in the breeze. What a commentary upon human greatness. He who has filled the world with his renown, now occupies a narrow spot in this great congregation of the dead.

"We left London yesterday, with an agreeable American acquaintance, for the purpose of passing a day or two at Wynde Cliff, the spot, you recollect, which so hospitably received us, saddened, dispirited, disheartened exiles, fleeing from home and country, and friends, for the single reason that our family had dared to be loyal to a king, seated by right upon the throne of his ancestors.

"How sweetly and peacefully flows the silver Wye through fertile vales, and beautiful meadows, now increasing its speed, as if to join the Severn, whose wide channel is bearing its darker waters to the sea.

"Sad yet soothing are the recollections, which to-day make me linger around this cherished residence.

"Here I first learned the language of my adopted country, studying the definition and pronunciation of words, with my sainted mother. Here my mind received the first rudiments of education, and first began to revel in the pleasure so entrancing, afforded by the cultivation of music. I had no conception of the beauty of the scenery. From the hills that almost hang over this stream, you have a most commanding view of the beautiful cottages, that *adorn* the variegated landscape. The recollection, which these

scenes awaken, inspire me with the highest pleasure, subdued and saddened somewhat, yet bringing up before my mind, the form and features of her, whom I trust, watches over us from her abode in heaven."

CHAPTER LXV.

So great had been the excitement, which had, during his stay in Paris, constantly disturbed Lefort, that he looked back with wistful eyes to the peace and happiness, which reigned at his home beyond the sea. His fullest hopes and anticipations had been realized in the ample redress, which the king had made him for his estate that had been confiscated. Through the aid of an old friend, who had remained in Paris during all its commotions, contriving to steer clear of all embarrassment in every change of government, he had been enabled to obtain those highly-prized works of art, which had once embellished his home upon the Seine, and which now would ornament a habitation, for ever free from the ruthless hands of unbridled licentiousness.

And Charles Grafton was willing, just now, to take a bird's-eye view of the wonders of London. For him, Oak Lawn upon the Teche, had more powerful attractions, than the grand, old massive memories, which so cluster about the Tower upon the Thames. Gladly did he adopt the suggestion of Mr. Lefort, to spend as little time as possible in the great city of the world.

We have not space to accompany them further on their excursions sight-seeing, or to dwell upon the incidents of their homeward voyage. Nor shall we attempt to describe those feelings of deep excitement, which so absorbed their hearts and minds, as again they returned to the adopted land of Lefort.

Changed, indeed, were the circumstances, which surrounded Lefort, when, years ago, he had come, in the strength of manhood, *to reside in* America. There was still the same old noble oak, its

deep green leaf yet unfaded; the same clear, placid stream gracefully wound through the prairies to the sea; the same sweet song from the swelling throat of the mocking-bird, which first greeted his arrival at Oak Lawn, now welcomed him back to his forest home. But there was one dear, secluded spot, over which a graceful willow was bending its fragile form, meet emblem of the stricken spirit, which told him that she, who had started with him upon the journey of life, whose sunny smile had brightened its morning, and whose unflinching fortitude had softened the dark shadows, which had ominously gathered around its noontide, had here found rest, ere those shadows had been dispersed in the bright light of his prosperity, and the unmingled fruition of those most dear to him. His heart was, however cheered in the confiding trust that that mind, which could not perish, unseen, yet present, clothed with heavenly vestments, took in all the joy and bliss, vouchsafed to those, who once more met under brightest auspices in their peaceful home.

How delightful, how unexpected was that reunion!

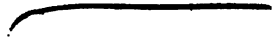
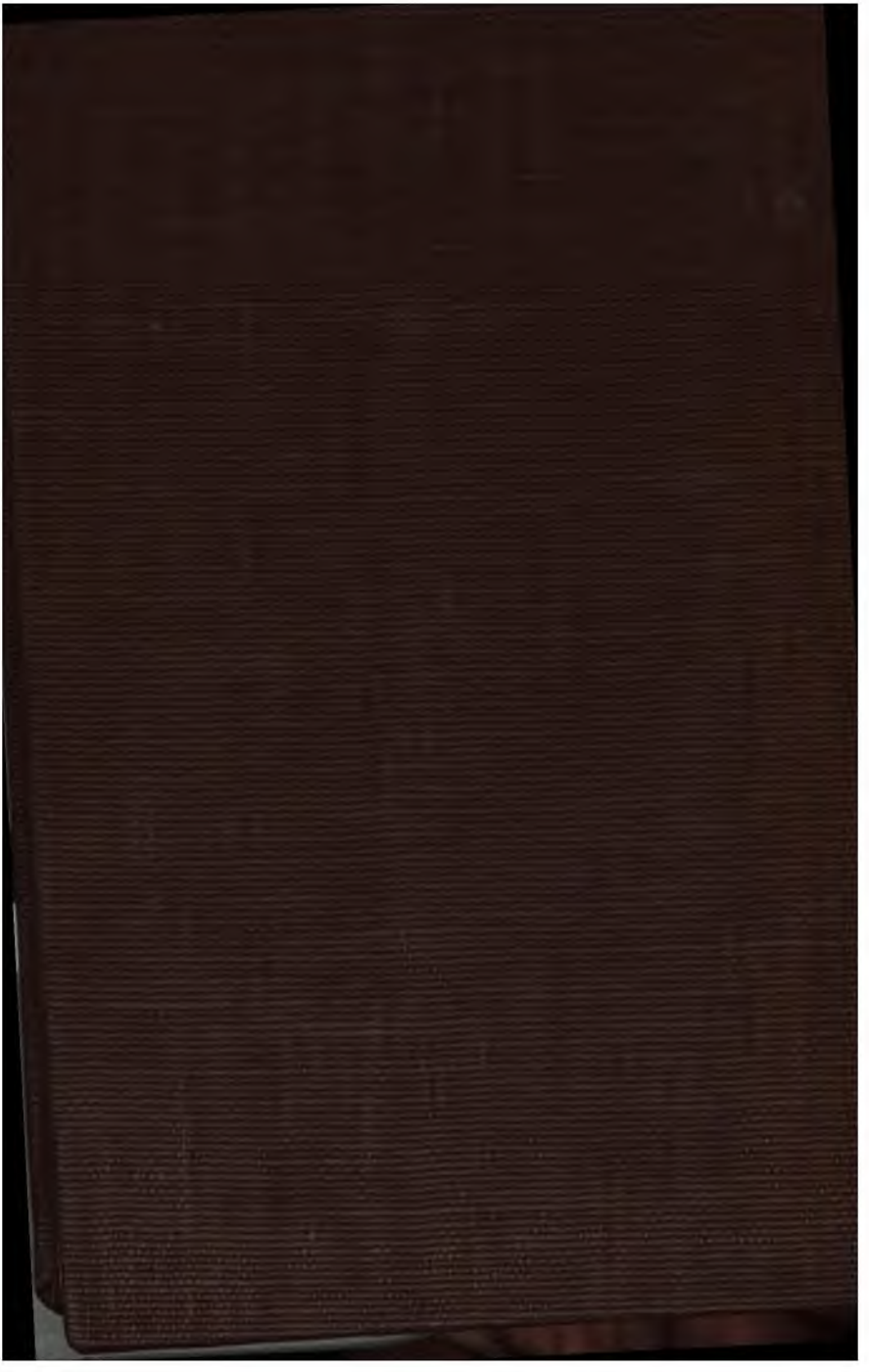
William and Louise had withheld from Lefort and Blanche the information that Charles Grafton was to be in Paris; they, in their turn, were to be equally surprised in seeing him now at Oak Lawn. The noble nature of Blanche would not suffer the honor of her lover to be dimmed for a moment longer in the estimation of her brother and sister. Addressing herself to William Burns, she said, "It is your business, from your vocation, to unravel difficult questions, and once did you save the life of an innocent and most excellent man, falsely accused, by discovering a dark plot, dear brother, through the instrumentality of a letter. Read these letters, and find the key to the conduct of Charles, which, to you and Louise, appeared so inscrutable." She handed the papers, which had so astonished herself and father in Paris, clearing up a mystery which had darkened their minds, and resulted in the promise, on the part of Blanche, that the con-

stancy and fidelity of Charles should be rewarded by a heart most true and faithful, and one to him prized above all others.

"Did I not tell you, Louise," said Burns, "that all misunderstanding would be explained; a mystery, which we could not fathom, would be solved: the wickedness of some dark scheme be exposed, upon the meeting of Charles and Blanche? Their mutual silence was, to my mind, proof irresistible of their deep interest in each other."

"Oh, you men," replied Louise, "wrapped up in your dignity and pride, would suffer a martyr's fate ere you would open your mouths for an explanation. Months and months had you and Charles passed in most familiar intercourse, your hearts burning with curiosity; a word would gratify it, and yet your lips are sealed. With minds yearning for information, which might be easily supplied, you chose to remain in blissful ignorance."

"Well, if our reserve has accomplished no more useful purpose," said Burns, "it may have tended to train and discipline character; and to show, that though the course of true love may not run smooth, yet the obstacles, which, for the time impede its passage, and ruffle its beautiful surface, will only serve in the end to widen the channel, through which may the more securely flow those higher and holier emotions and principles, which make us happier in life, nor leave us at its close."

And now we part with our fair readers, inviting them to the bridal feast at Oak Lawn, and leaving to their own more vivid imaginations, the pleasing task of putting the finishing touch to a picture, whose lights and shades we have presented in the foregoing pages.

THE END.